TO MESOPOTAMIA AND KURDISTAN IN DISGUISE

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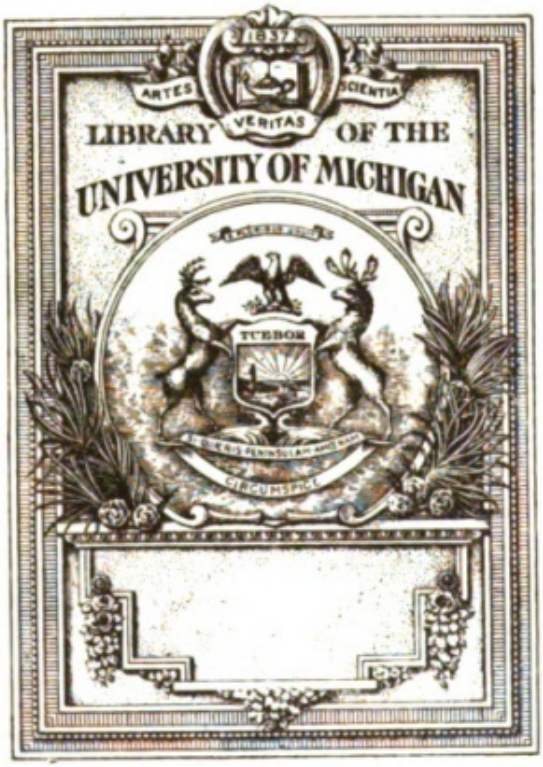

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A JAF CHIEF, S. KURDISTAN.

[*Frontispiece.*

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TO MESOPOTAMIA AND KURDISTAN IN DISGUISE

WITH HISTORICAL NOTICES OF THE KURDISH TRIBES AND THE CHALDEANS OF KURDISTAN

BY E. B. SOANE

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.
1912

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PREFATORY NOTE

THE following chapters are a plain narrative of a journey across Mesopotamia and in Southern Kurdistan, made up from a journal kept throughout the voyage from Constantinople to Bagdad through those countries.

I think I may fairly claim that I have given here a description of a great deal so far undescribed, also a view of places, already known, from another standpoint.

Several of the situations have made it necessary to mention the fact of a knowledge of Persian, extensive enough to enable the writer to pass among Persians as one of themselves. Lest this appear a needless and offensive boast, I would say that the incidents demand its mention, and it is explained in the course of the narrative.

In the historical portions of the book, in so far as more modern history is concerned, I have been enabled to give some entirely new matter, for that on Kurdish history was supplied me in letters received from Shah Ali of Aoraman, Shaikh Reza of Kirkuk, Tahir Beg Jaf, Majid Beg Jaf, Muhammad Ali Beg Jaf, while a great part was communicated during conversations at Halabja and Sulaimania. This information, then, I think is unique. As to the chapter on Chaldean history, I am deeply indebted to M. Badria, Rais-i-Millat of Mousil, also to his brother Habib Badria, who, having access to old histories in Mousil, were generous enough to allow me the benefit of their information.

There is, I am afraid, an overwhelming use of the first

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personal pronoun, which I trust may be forgiven, for without it the story would not be a personal one.

The tone of the narrative may betoken, perhaps, a partiality to the Kurds; and I must admit, that having met from them more genuine kindness—unclaimed—than from any other collection of strangers met elsewhere, I owe them a large debt of gratitude, the least return for which is to throw some light upon a national character hitherto represented as being but an epitome of all that is savage, treacherous, and inhuman.

E. B. S.

MOHAMMERAH.

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CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	IN STAMBOUL	1
II.	FROM CONSTANTINOPLE TO HIERAPOLIS	16
III.	FROM THE EUPHRATES TO THE TIGRIS, EDESSA (URFA), AND AMID (DIARBEKR)	34
IV.	DOWN THE TIGRIS TO MOSUL	60
V.	MOSUL, THE CITIES OF THE ASSYRIANS, THE YAZIDIS	89
VI.	THE ZAB RIVERS, ANCIENT ASSYRIA AND ADIABENE, ARBELA, KIRKUK	106
VII.	CHALDEANS	140
VIII.	BY THE HAMAVANDS TO SULAIMANIA	163
IX.	SULAIMANIA	184
X.	SHAHR-I-ZUR	210
XI.	SHAHR-I-ZUR AND HALABJA	248
XII.	LIFE IN SULAIMANIA	273
XIII.	LIFE IN SULAIMANIA (*continued*)	294
XIV.	TO KIRKUK	325
XV.	TO BAGDAD	351
XVI.	OF KURDS AND THEIR COUNTRY	367
	APPENDIX—KURDISH TRIBES	405
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	409
	INDEX	411

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

A Jaf Chief, S. Kurdistan	.	*Frontispiece*
Bab-ul-top and Auchon Market, Mosul	*To face p.*	92
On the Persian Frontier, S. Kurdistan	„	160
Aoraman	„	184
The Kurdish Frontier Mountains	„	336
Encampment of Jaf Kurds in Shahr-i-zur	„	380

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TO MESOPOTAMIA AND KURDISTAN IN DISGUISE

CHAPTER I

IN STAMBOUL

WHEN I descended from the train one dismal morning in Constantinople, in a bleak terminus just like a hundred others of its kind all over the Continent, it was with the intention of staying in the Ottoman capital for some time. A long residence in the Middle East had rendered me susceptible to the magnetism it certainly exerts, and at the same time had given me a very thorough appreciation of the comforts and conveniences of the Occident. As I was quite ignorant of the western parts of the Turkish Empire, and entertained the same ideas regarding them as I suppose do most people at home, it seemed that Constantinople must furnish a delectable resting-place, a point from which to look out upon East and West with equal facility, choosing from each the features necessary to a pleasant life that should be within reach of books and libraries, and afford equally a way of escape among Oriental people and surroundings, without necessitating a long journey and longer bill.

Unfortunately I knew neither Constantinople nor its winter climate, nor its inhabitants. I had never had dealings with Turks, and had left out of my calculations the Greeks, who make up thirty-five per cent. of the population of this capital, once theirs by right of sovereignty, and still almost theirs in all that concerns the world of commerce.

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As a matter of fact, the sum total of my knowledge at the moment I arrived was that Constantinople consisted of three quarters or districts, Pera, Galata, and Stamboul, and possessed an hotel called the Pera Palace, the expenses at which were far too grand for my cottage style of purse.

By some person of doubtful nationality, I had been advised to go to a French pension in Galata, which I was assured was cheap, clean, and comfortable. As French pensions in other parts of the world may be, and often are, all these three, the scheme seemed an excellent one; so having escaped from a weary and bored Customs official at the station, I piled my belongings upon a victoria, and we started to clatter over the knobs of stone, and through the mud-pits that are the roads of Constantinople. Through mean streets we rolled and banged our way where horse trams clanked and crawled, between rows of shops whose wares were just those of the cheap streets of any continental city, to the floating bridge over the water called the Golden Horn, a most perfect misnomer in December, suggesting the crowning sarcasm of some disappointed tourist.

At the approach to this curious bridge, we were halted amid a dense crowd of foot-passengers in the everlasting fez—sprinkled with bowler hats and the headgear of every European nation—and made to pay five piastres (10d.) for the right to pass. In order to prevent any passenger evading the toll, a row of Turkish officials stood across the road, clad in a conspicuous enough uniform—a white smock.

The Golden Horn was of a very ordinary mud colour, and below the bridge, prosaic enough with its crowd of steamers and the busy ferry-boats that ply up and down the Bosphorus and to the Asiatic shore. The wharfs were lined with unbeautiful Customs, port, and shipping offices, backed on the rising ground by the indescribably hideous imitation French and Viennese architecture of Galata and Pera. Tall barracks with rows and rows of filthy windows looked out upon the prospect, and at their *vis à vis* in Stamboul across the water, and, crowning the

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mountain of wall and window formed by the successive tiers of houses up the hill-side, rose the Tower of Galata, a circular erection topped by a Turkish flag.

The roadway of the bridge being laid with large baulks of timber placed transversely, no two of which ever arrive at a common level, prevents rapid travelling even were the road clear of foot-passengers, who use it in preference to the footpaths. The Galata end plunges into a street absolutely packed with human beings, carts and carriages, where all the money-changers of Galata—Constantinople's business town—seem to have congregated. A turn to the right leads to more trams, and a long and weary cobbled street of shops large and small, along whose pavements saunter the deck-hands of steamers hailing from every European and Levantine port. Greeks of course are in the majority, many in their national costume of blue tights, with a huge and pendulous posterior, coloured shirt and little zouave jacket, and a hat of the "pork-pie" order. Armenians, too, abound, and Levantines of all kinds. Italians, in this Italian quarter of Galata, are everywhere, and the language of the streets is anything except Turkish. Here and there an incongruous group of fierce and savage fellows, with packs of stuffed leather upon their backs—the Constantinopolitan edition of "the Porter's knot"—shout and joke in a tongue understood of none even in this cosmopolitan city. They are Kurds, the strongest, most manly of the population, and the most despised, probably for those very qualities—in this town of sharping and guile.

Leaving this street and crawling up some very steep inclines lined by tenement houses, the carriage reached a long road running along the side of the hill. I suppose it should be called a street, for want of a better, or worse, name; but as we associate the word with another order of thing, it is well to explain that this, an important enough artery of Galata traffic, was—and doubtless still is—a wide alley of cobble paving, with huge holes at frequent and irregular intervals. In the absence of underground drainage, the paving sloped to the middle, and after filling the holes,

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the excess liquid filth flowed downhill. The solid variety, however, to which every resident contributed with assiduity, lay in heaps and figures about the street, proclaiming in the language of putrescence the quality of the inhabitants. In describing this main street of the Italian quarter,[1] I have described most of Constantinople, excepting only a few excellent streets on the Bosphorus side of Pera, where the wealthy foreigners live.

At the door of a kind of restaurant I was deposited, and no sooner had the carriage stopped than an ancient woman opened the door and welcomed me in fluent Italian. As my knowledge of that language is limited, she called loudly for "Marie," a shrewd and kindly woman of about thirty, who appeared from a sort of cellar from behind the eating-room, and in French informed me that she had a room, told me the very reasonable terms, and asked for a deposit; and very soon I found myself installed in an uncarpeted apartment furnished with an iron stove, a bed, a washhand-stand, and a small table. This was the best room. A powerful and eloquent odour pervaded the house, telling of the thoroughly Italian nature of the cooking, and hinting at the existence of innumerable cesspools on the premises. I found afterwards that there were five latrines in the house.

It needed but a dinner in the eating-room to complete the tale of excellence of this exceptional pension, where one met Armenians and Levantines performing the usual skilful feats with knives and awkward morsels, regarding the fork as an instrument fit only for the inexperienced and timorous.

Next morning I climbed by devious alleys, and through lakes and torrents of filth to Pera, and spent hours trying to find better accommodation at a moderate price; but after being shown the loathsome dens of various Armenians and Greeks, and retiring with the best grace possible before the astonishing charges of every clean and relatively wholesome place, I was fortunate enough to meet a Russian, a tenant of an "appartement"—the Constan-

[1] The Rue Luledjie Hendek.

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tinopolitan flat—who wished to find an occupier during a three months' visit to Moscow.

To my great delight the "appartement"—in a new building close to the Pera Palace Hotel, in one of the best parts of Constantinople—was clean and well-furnished, and we closed, with as much satisfaction on his side, I hope, as on mine. At any rate, he insisted upon sealing the arrangement with innumerable "aperitifs," followed by vodkas and liqueurs at various *brasseries* about Pera, and having become friendly with a resplendent lady of Roumania, he bade me farewell and departed with his new acquaintance.

While in Constantinople I never regretted the arrangement, for the place was comfortable and convenient, and being in the midst of Pera, which is nothing but a semi-French town with no more evidence of Turks about it than a few porters and cabmen in fez, and drunken police, I began to forget what I had come for, namely, to get in touch with the Oriental side of the city. As a matter of fact, one made so many curious and interesting acquaintances among the French, Armenian, Roumanian, Russian, Balkan, and other elements, that one's time seemed fully absorbed with them. I quite forgot to commence studying the Turkish language, and acquired a fine proficiency in French, and picked up a little Greek, a language as useful in Constantinople as Turkish. After some time, however, when the execrable weather permitted, I began to make excursions to Stamboul, and avoiding all guide-books, found out the show-places myself, and many other interesting corners, among which I counted the shops of the Persian Turks in the Great Bazaar, where I always was sure of a warm welcome, simply because I affected a liking for their Persia, and hoped with them—perhaps against hope—for her regeneration and independence.

In the Great Bazaar, too, was just a touch of that East in which I had lived, and was to see once more, though the effect was so often spoiled by the interpreter of Mr T. Cook and his train of amiable creatures, seeking the "secret of the mysterious East" in the shops of Greeks.

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There, donning a fez, I would stroll, my headgear saving me from the disagreeable attentions of the Greek shopkeepers, the most pertinacious of their calling in the city. For a long time among the natives of Persia in the bazaar I could find none but Tabrizi. Persian Turks often enough know little Persian; but at last I found a native of Shiraz, much to my delight, for a residence of two years among the Shirazi has always been a pleasant memory, and this particular Shirazi, too, seemed as glad as I was to meet a sincere admirer of the Jewel of Southern Persia, "The Pearl among the Emeralds."

At any rate, if kindness and hospitality be any criterion, my Shirazi was certainly pleased to find a kindred spirit.

Great amusement was caused among my friends of Persia by a passage-at-arms I had with the Persian Consul. I had heard that an old acquaintance was second secretary at the Consulate, and one day found my way by the steep and crooked alleys of Stamboul to the dirty red-painted building that flies the Persian flag. Entering the court-yard, I was accosted by the doorkeeper in Turkish, and as at that time I had considerable difficulty in understanding that language, I addressed him in Persian. This was more than he had expected from a stray European, and as his knowledge of Persian was as feeble as mine of Turkish, he passed me on to a suave little "mirza" or clerk, a Teherani.

I asked after my friend Mirza Hasan Khan, and was told that he had left for Persia some time ago, so I turned to leave the place. I had hardly reached the gate, however, than the little man came running after, and in polite Persian asked me to "bring my excellence" to the Consul-General, who desired to see me.

Following him upstairs and through a group of waiting peasants of Azarbaijan, I was introduced into a large room well carpeted with Persian rugs, where sat at a writing-table the Consul-General, a middle-aged Persian gentleman. Beside him upon a couch was his first secretary, a smiling little man from Tabriz.

I was at a loss to know why he wanted to see me, and

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could only suppose that he wished to know who I was and what was my business with Mirza Hasan Khan. Entering, I saluted him in the Persian fashion, whose etiquette demands that the entrant shall first salute the occupants of a room. Receiving the usual reply, I accepted his invitation to be seated, and waited for him to speak, again following Persian custom, which forbids the less important of two men to open conversation.

He began by asking if I had been long in Constantinople, whether I intended to stay, how I liked it, and so on, and having exhausted his preliminary questions a pause occurred, during which the two Persians regarded me in a steadfast and interested manner, which I was at a loss to account for, as they are usually far too well-mannered to embarrass a visitor in any way.

After a rather awkward minute thus, the Consul, in an abrupt and official manner, exclaimed—

"Why this disguise? wherefore these lies? the truth were better; tell me your native town."

For a moment astonishment held me; this kind of conversation is possible from a Turk, but from a Persian! To say nothing of being quite at a loss to account for this extraordinary change of manner, I could not at all fathom the reason for such inquiries politely or impolitely made. In my innocence I had imagined myself paying a mere complimentary call, and found myself addressed as a defaulter of some kind, and so waited for further enlightenment.

"Lies?" I asked.

"Yes, lies; it is evident to me that you are a Shirazi, your tongue betrays you, and I wish to know what you have done to render expedient this kind of appearance, and this weak story of being an Englishman."

It occurred to me suddenly that here was the representative of Muhammad Ali Shah who had, six months before, by a coup, replaced himself upon the throne of absolute power, dissolving in the most drastic way the Chamber of Representatives, many of whose supporters had fled to Europe and were travelling about in European

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dress. Evidently I was being mistaken for one of these.

In this dilemma I bethought myself of my passport, and fortunately discovered it, together with a number of letters, including one from the Persian Ambassador addressed to "Mūsīū Soon," and after some difficulty succeeded in proving my identity.

The Consul's cordiality returned in a moment. With the utmost effusiveness he invited me to a large armchair, produced cigarettes, and called for tea. The visit from that moment took the form of usual ceremonial call upon a Persian. As I took my leave, remarking that I hoped he would not seek to have me arrested as a revolutionist, he said, thinking the whole affair a good joke:

"Well, you shouldn't speak Persian so fluently; you see your countrymen are usually so backward in acquiring our language, that when one appears talking as we do, can you expect us to believe it?"

I saw him several times afterwards, and he always met me with the air of a man who shares some great and confidential jest with one.

About this time, December 1908, the Turkish Parliament was inaugurated, and amid the discord of Turkish bands and through avenues of flags and festoons, the procession of deputies and foreign representatives fought its way to the House at Stamboul, to sit for a few months and prove its futility.

The attitude of the Persians, who had been the first to experience the pains and penalties of popular representation, was interesting. It was, of course, popularly supposed that the Persian element in Constantinople and Smyrna—some ten thousand people—displayed heartwhole enthusiasm for the Turkish "Mejliss," and if the addresses and congratulations of the Persian political clubs were to have been believed, this supposition would have been true. Persians, however, are always alive to the value of expediency, and obviously clubs which, existing only by the tolerance of the Turks, propagated doctrines only to be regarded as heterodox by the Persian Ambassador and

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consuls, must display conspicuously their sympathy with any popular Ottoman movement.

In the privacy of their own houses, the sarcasm and deprecation of foreigners so near the tip of the Persian tongue found ready articulation.

As Shī'a, these refugees, to put it but mildly, lack sympathy with any movement of the Sunni Turks, and having seen repeated in the election and the arrangement of the Turkish "Mejliss" several of the errors which contributed to the discord and downfall of the first Persian Parliament, were disposed to look on with supercilious superiority at the efforts of a nation which they ever regarded as rather barbarian. Besides which, bad as Persia was under the old regime, the lot of the peasant and the humbler town-dweller was never so bad as was that of the equivalent classes in Turkey; and if there are degrees in the perfection of corruption arrived at by the administrative powers of both empires, there are few experienced Turks and Persians who will not give the palm for completeness in this art to Turkey, at any rate in her Asiatic provinces.

So the Persians, looking on, seeing all the difficulties to be surmounted, difficulties complicated by the turbulent and treacherous temperament of Greek and Armenian, waited to see an eventful crisis, and when it came as they had predicted, the triumphant attitude of "I told you so," for which they had prepared themselves, was intensified by the feeling of having also scored off an old enemy.

The only immediate outcome of the Parliament's inauguration, so far as it affected the dweller in the city, was to provide a number of newspapers with columns filled with reports of speeches—no whit more or less puerile than those provided by our Parliament for the London papers—and a large increase in drunkenness, particularly among the police. The provinces responded with their own interpretation of "Hurriat" by lawlessness of every description, which increased to a point almost unknown in Turkish history, at least in the Asiatic provinces, with which alone this book is concerned.

After all, it was a faithful enough repetition of Persia

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in early 1907, when the dying Muzaffar ud Din Shah granted the first Persian Constitution. In that unfortunate country the ignorant mass looked to the Majlis to produce, within a few days, a panacea for the ills that had grown up and become an integral part of the nation during centuries of misrule, and the failure of the people's representatives even to adjust minor matters resulted in the outbursts all over the country which eventually, fanned by Muhammad Ali Shah, enabled him to regain his absolute power for a time.

In the Turkish Empire practically exactly the same thing happened. Needless to say, a very large section of the people was vitally interested in the existence of Sultan Abdul Hamid as a despot, particularly those powerful priests and place-holders who amassed wealth by means possible only when the Sultan was there to consent, and participate. The victims of this large class expected that with the proclamation of "Hurriat" ("freedom") these tyrants would retire swiftly into oblivion, but as time went on and the bloodsuckers (and bloodspillers too) continued their operations with increased vigour, the people, emboldened by the new political doctrines, rose in every direction. Tribes of Arabs and Kurds, who had regarded the new regime as a partial revival of their importance and a return—in a degree—to some of their ancient independence, finding levies upon them of taxes and recruits undiminished, rebelled against the Majlis and Sultan alike—a situation resulting which, at the time of writing,[1] bids fair to give the Turks and their army as much as they can do for some time to come.

It is fair to add that many of these outbursts are said to have been aggravated secretly by Sultan Abdul Hamid, who had submitted with a meekness never seen in the Persian monarch to the drastic changes his people effected. At any rate, his end was the same as that of Muhammad Ali Shah, for after a few months both find themselves deposed and in retirement.

In any case, the politics of Constantinople are too well

[1] Autumn 1909.

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known to need ventilation here, so we may as well return to our original subject of Persians.

I learned soon after my arrival in Constantinople that Kurds abounded, but all of the Kermānjī or Zāzā tribes of Northern Turkish Kurdistan, and my hopes of finding a Kurd of Southern Persian Kurdistan seemed as if they would certainly end in disappointment. My reason for wanting to meet one of these people was to complete certain studies to which I had already devoted a year, in Kermanshah of Western Persia.

By chance, however, one of my Persian friends informed me one day that a priest had recently arrived from Sina of Persian Kurdistan; but beyond telling me his title, Shaikh ul Islām, and indicating vaguely where he imagined him to be living, in one of the curious caravanserais of Stamboul, he could tell me nothing; and as the Shaikh in question was a fanatical Sunni, I naturally could not expect my Shi'a friend to interest himself more deeply.

I was resolved to find him, however, and so spent some days tramping up and down the terrible alleys and streets of Stamboul, inquiring at every Muhammadan hotel and doing the round of all the caravanserais I could find, asking for the Shaikh ul Islām of Sina, a question that evoked considerable merriment among most of the Turks to whom I succeeded in communicating my meaning in the few Turkish words I knew. As is always the case in Turkey, inquisitiveness was the greatest impediment and nuisance. Anyone of whom I asked would put a string of questions as to why and wherefore, and who and whence, which my ignorance fortunately prevented my answering.

At last, however, by dint of getting a list of caravanserais, and taking them one by one, I found the Shaikh's habitation. This particular serai was like most in Constantinople, a two-storeyed building of tiny, windowless rooms round a courtyard, amid which a small house was erected, equally containing separate cells. The first floor had a gallery running round it upon which the rooms

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opened, and I found my man in a corner cell, or rather found where he was when at home. All this time the weather was indescribably awful, daily blizzards, rain-storms and blizzards again, freezing hurricanes from the plains and uplands to the north and west; and I wondered how this native of sunny Persia, a stranger to these terrible days of darkness, could live, and what is more, raise the courage to go forth into the mire and filth of Constantinople streets.

His servant I saw, a Kurd of Sina, who spoke a little Persian, and who was so astounded at hearing a European speak Kurdish that he quite lost his tongue. However, we made an appointment, and two days after saw me once more facing a blinding snowstorm to shuffle for half an hour from Pera through Galata across the Golden Horn, now a funnel where all the winds of all the ice on earth seemed to blow into Stamboul.

Crawling over the heaps of snow in the caravanserai courtyard, where not a soul was visible, I ascended the rickety staircase and knocked at the low door at the gallery end. Some one shouted in Persian "Kī a" ("Who is it?"), and getting a reply in the same language, told me to walk in—which I did.

A small skylight sufficiently illuminated the place, and at once its arrangements stamped the occupants as natives of Persia. Opposite me, a tin road-samovar sang behind a row of little tea-glasses. Upon the samovar head sat a squat little teapot, and the Kurdish servant was filling a Persian hubble-bubble beside a brazier. Three or four Persian wooden boxes ornamented with brass-headed nails were by the walls, and in a corner were the necessaries of the road, earthen water-pots, tin "af tābeh" —a kind of jug for ablutions—tin wash-basin, and other articles with which every traveller in Persia is familiar. Commencing halfway and covering the floor to the farther end was a gilīm, a kind of carpet, woven in Persian Kurdistan, and seated facing one another, their legs concealed under a quilt apparently supported upon a stool, were two men. Him I sought was a black-browed

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and bearded priest, an individual surly looking enough to scare away any uninvited visitor. His companion was but an older edition of himself. Their heads were covered by small white turbans, but whether they had changed their native dress for that of Constantinople I could not see, as they both wore heavy overcoats.

The stool under the quilt covered in its turn a brazier of charcoal, and formed the "kursi," which is the Kurdish method of keeping oneself warm. Obviously the heat, which is considerable, is confined to the space under the quilt and does not escape into the room, which in this case was bitterly cold.

The Shaikh had been informed of my coming, and welcomed me in Persian, with just enough Kurdish accent to be perceptible; and I squeezed my legs under the quilt, which he pulled up to our chins, and spent a few minutes exchanging compliments with him and the older man. The situation might have struck an outsider unused to a "kursi" as absurd: the spectacle of three men apparently sitting up in a kind of a huge bed, for the quilt was an ordinary bed-quilt, and pillows supported our backs—nodding gravely over the top of the bedclothes at one another.

They were much depressed by the weather, but on my telling them that I had been to their Kurdistan and knew their country and language they revived somewhat, and with tea and cigarettes became jovial and communicative, supplying me with a great deal of the information upon tribes, that I had come to seek, but had not hoped to acquire in the first interview.

However, the climate of Constantinople had done sufficient to disgust them with the place, and the Shaikh announced his intention of leaving by the first steamer for Beyrouth, and returning to a place called Halabja, on the Persio-Turkish frontier, in the Southern Kurdish country. Not unnaturally I was curious to know, first, the reason for his leaving Kurdistan; and second, why he did not propose to return there, stopping short on the frontier at the nearest spot. Tentatively I put a question or two, but

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he evidently had a suspicion of all strangers, and I had to be content with my own theories, which could evolve nothing more probable than classing him as a political refugee; at any rate, he seemed pretty miserable in these strange and squalid surroundings, and, bearing in his language and manner the strong reminiscence of Persian Kurdistan, seemed terribly out of place in this town that aped Europe and all its meanest features.

In all, I had three interviews; he would not be induced to come over to Pera, which he had heard of as a town full of European women and shops "à la ferangi," where he considered his priestly turban and flowing garments very out of place. So each time I found him under the quilt with his companion, much depressed, very silent, sighing heavily, and talking of nothing but places and people he had left behind in his native mountains.

My acquaintance with him, though little enough, was the cause of ripening an idea which ever since I had arrived in, and disliked, Constantinople, had gradually been springing up in my mind. Though no Kurd, nor separated from kin and custom, yet as a former dweller in the east of Persia, I yearned for the freedom of plain and mountain, the slow march of the clanging caravan, the droning song of the shepherds on the hills, the fresh clean air, and the burning sun. His talk was of all this, and my thoughts of it too. His dialect and his rough Persian recalled too vividly scenes of a year before. Irresistibly pictures arose of the plain and hill of Kurdistan, the glorious sunsets over plain and on snowy peak, and the more I gave way to these day-dreams, the more I let the rude accents linger in my ear, the stronger grew the attraction of the road.

The Shaikh left and I heard no more of him, but I missed him and his little room, a corner of Kurdistan in Constantinople, with occupants whose home habits remained unassailed by all the temptations of the city's coffee-houses and comforts, and daily I could not help picturing his progress across Syria, and gradually to the borders of Kurdistan, the Tigris lowlands. I even hailed

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the day he should have got to the first Kurdish town as notable, little dreaming that he had been robbed and nearly killed before he got there—by Kurds.

At last I made a compact with the weather: if it really cleared and warmed by a certain date, I would stay; otherwise, permitting no other consideration to hinder, I would resolutely book a passage to Beyrouth, and find my way to Kurdistan.

Funds certainly were scarce; I could not afford to travel as a European usually does, with servants, paying double for everything and occupying the best quarters everywhere. If I went I must don a fez and pass as a native of the East, must buy my own food, and do my own haggling, must do all those things which no European could or would ever think of doing. In Persia I had had experience of life in disguise as a Persian, and this would be an easier task for I was a stranger among strangers, and any difference in our ways and habits would be put down to that fact. There was a certain attraction, too, in going unattended by anyone, knowing practically no Turkish nor Arabic, across Syria and down the Tigris to Kurdistan. Once there I should be more at home, for I knew two or three dialects and Persian pretty perfectly, which would enable me to pass as a Persian among the Kurds, and to hide ignorance of that habit and custom which are the rule of life in the East. As to Muhammadan observances, I had in Persia learned all that, and as a Shi'a could say my prayers, and dispute the Qur'an with the best of them.

So, all things considered, the scheme recommended itself. It was cheap, I should see much new country, and many new tribes. I should learn many more Kurdish dialects, and when I had finished should be in possession of a truer knowledge of the people, their ways and nature, than a European possibly could in ten years.

So I sat down and waited for the decision of the weather.

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CHAPTER II

FROM CONSTANTINOPLE TO HIERAPOLIS

"Chauakānam kaot ba chūl u raikadā
Halmbarī chū be vairān jakadā."
("My eyes were turned towards the solitude and road,
And I rose up and went to desert places.")
Song of the Erzinjan Kurds.

THE weather was not so fond of me as to clear up for the sake of keeping me, for as the day of decision approached it grew steadily worse, and it was in a driving storm of cold rain that I waded down to Galata and booked a passage by the Messageries Maritimes steamer to Beyrouth.

There were few arrangements to make; a passport I possessed; it was but necessary to provide myself with a document called a "tezkere i ubūrī," a travelling passport in Turkish, issued by the police. So having obtained an order from the Consul, I found my way to a collection of huts, called the "Eski Zaptié," in Stamboul, and after running from hovel to hovel in order to interview numerous effendis, whose duties apparently consisted of making marks upon the application form, I was suddenly presented with the document from an unsuspected corner of a dirty courtyard. The writer was absolutely unaware of my existence in the building, nevertheless I found myself described in Turkish as of medium height, dark-haired, and beardless, with black moustache, all fairly accurate—last and most, of the "Protestant" religion. I was to pass during most of my journey as a Muhammadan, and here I found at the outset all my plans checked by a

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Turkish clerk who described me in his fatuous passport as a Protestant. Naturally enough I protested, and vigorously, against the right of these omniscient police clerks to brand me as of any sect or creed; but they were mildly astonished at my objections, and could not be brought to see any point except that all Turks were Musulman, all Armenians "Kristiān," all French "Kātūlīk," and all English and Americans "Purūtestān." They but regarded these as the religious names of the nations, and could not conceive that an Englishman might be any one of the innumerable dissenting sects. That he could be a Catholic was too obviously absurd, and the increase of their contempt for my intelligence was most marked as I asserted the possibility. So the offending word had to stand, and I resolved secretly to erase or destroy it whenever necessary.

The day of departure was like the preceding months, rainy and cold, and I looked with pleasant anticipation upon the prospect of seeing in a few days the sunny hills of Syria. Our ship was the *Saghalien*, a comfortable and roomy old boat. The early spring season had brought with it the first of the tourists to Palestine. Arriving on board, I heard the first English that had fallen upon my ears since I had left London. The parties were incongruous enough. Four or five Roman Catholic priests escorted a company of pious "bourgeois" to the pilgrimage at Jerusalem, while another and much larger party of manufacturing folk of wealth and accent had been gathered from Leeds, Leicester, and a dozen other of the Midland towns of England. A second party had been formed by some imitator of Mr T. Cook, and included no less than six gentlemen of religious profession, each from a different sect of British dissenters. These were all provincial too. An American and his wife, a Turkish Pasha and his family and attendant effendis, and some unattached and inconsequent Germans and French, pretty well made up a full ship.

As I had to start wearing a fez sooner or later, I thought I might as well begin at once, and pass for a

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Persian going to Persia, which would excuse my ignorance of Turkish, which no other disguise I could have adopted would have been effectual in doing. In the guise of a native of a far land, and *en route* for places where the name "English" was hardly known, I felt strangely cut off from my fellow Europeans when I heard them talking about their tour, planning expeditions and journeys new—when they should have "done" Palestine and Egypt, and returned once more to their Midland towns—experienced Oriental travellers.

It is strange what a simple exchange of headgear can do. Here was I, by the mere fact of wearing a fez, isolated, looked down upon by types one would pass unnoticed in London, audibly commented upon as "quite a civilised-looking Turk," exciting wonder as to "'ow many wives 'e's got," and such traditionally Oriental questions. The ignorance of these people was wonderful and colossal. We sighted, I remember, Mitylene one morning, and all the force of parsons and tourists hung over the rail with guide-books and glasses, disputed whether the high land was Chios or Rhodes, oblivious of the big chart on the top of the saloon stairs, where our position could be reckoned on the route line at the expense of two minutes' thought. They certainly appreciated the beauties of the glorious archipelago through which we passed, not too quickly, and faithfully enough raised enthusiasm in the places the guide-books recommended. Rhodes, when we did get there, and they were certain it was not Cyprus, created great excitement among them, the controversy anent the Colossus and his legs was heated enough to keep the subject alive quite two hours after the island had disappeared beneath the blue horizon, "quite as blue as the sea at Blackpool," as one Manchester man affirmed, in a spirit of rash generosity.

Before we had been two days at sea, I was drawn into uttering some words of English in a moment of thoughtlessness, and that to a very hearty individual from Newcastle. He trod heavily upon my feet, and as I quite involuntarily replied to his apology with an English phrase, he looked

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at me in the most utter astonishment, ejaculated, "Great 'eavens, you speak English."

"Yes," I said, "I was brought up in England."

"Oh," he replied, apparently relieved, "that accounts for it, you—er, where are ye goin' to?"

I told him I was going to Persia, and his hasty conclusion saved me the trouble of any equivocal statement for the moment, for he continued:

"Oh, then, I suppose you're one of those Persian gentlemen that's been in England lately for the Persian Parliament. 'Ow d'you like England, what part d'you know best?"

"Kent and Sussex," I replied, perfectly truthfully, ignoring his first remarks, "and all the south, for I have never been farther north than Lincoln."

Here we were joined by one of my interlocutor's friends, and I was introduced with some enthusiasm, my discoverer announcing in the tone of a naturalist who had just found a rare bug,

"This gentleman speaks English as well as you and me, every bit; 'e's a Persian, goin' to Persia."

Well, from that moment, I became very popular among these folk, and found them very hearty indeed, especially when I gave them the information that Persia looked to constitutional England for sympathy and help, and regarded her as a natural and ancient friend; in contradistinction to the Russians, whose Cossacks she detested. The fact of my being a Persian—naturally enough, they seemed to think—gave me a claim to their friendship, and nothing pleased them more than to get me to tell them of my country's wrongs, her aims and ambitions, her history and customs, her religion and literature, and every conceivable subject. On every such occasion I had a sympathetic and interested audience, who asked innumerable questions, and whom I was pleased to be able to enlighten considerably. They had to confess that their preconceived ideas were very changed, and the general attitude they acquired and which they were at no pains to conceal, being genuine and honest, if unpolished fellows,

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was that of well-informed superiority, which should assert itself on their return to England.

In playing this part I suppose I was playing also a very mean trick, the only excuse for which is that I am a sincere well-wisher of Persia, where I have spent some pleasant years of my life, and this disguise afforded my assertions an extra credence and weight which no Englishman, however well informed, could hope to obtain from his countrymen on so remote a subject as Persia.

So agreeably did the time pass, that I was sorry to see the hills of Beyrouth draw closer and closer. These were the last Englishmen that I should see for a long time, for my disguise quite prevented my being able to call upon consuls where they existed in towns upon my route. With considerable regret I bade them good-bye and saw them depart, led by one of those terrible creatures, a native Christian, the lust of tips and perquisites gleaming in his eyes. As I watched them, helpless and confused, being shoved this way and that, I almost envied them; for they were going to "sail" through Palestine in special trains and carriages, put up at the best hotels, and return in the same lordly fashion to England; while I was embarked upon a very different enterprise, to be conducted always with an eye to the elusive piastre, and a ready, lying tongue.

And so I found myself sharing, with two Turks and an Arab Christian of Aleppo, a small boat, from which we were bundled out into the Customs with a herd of Arabs, Turks, and all kinds of Levantines.

I was recommended by a Syrian who spoke French—like everyone else in Beyrouth—to put up in a small hotel on the quay, and was given a room overlooking the harbour, with a little verandah in front, where one must sit warily, for dirty locomotives shunting in the street had a way of stopping just underneath and firing with a particularly poisonous kind of coal, the while they blew off steam from remarkably noisy safety-valves. This was the terminus of the Lebanon Tramway, which crawls up the hills to a point called Rayak.

The hotel, kept by a Turk, was clean and cool, but to

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feed one had to go round the corner to a kind of restaurant, "à la ferang," where an incongruous party of pilgrims of every race returning from Mecca sat uneasily on small chairs, and regarded with distrust the array of knives and forks a Greek waiter set before them.

Beyrouth—once one of the greatest maritime cities of the Phœnicians, when Tyre sent out her ships to the Tin Islands—has grown since then, and is now a flourishing and picturesque city, built upon the slopes of the hills that separate Syria from the Mediterranean. The population is, I should think, mostly Christian, and only in the alleys of a small bazaar does one see the real signs of an Oriental city. For the rest, there are broad and dusty roads, a large public square and gardens, and electric tramways everywhere. The language of the place is more French than Arabic, and English receives good attention at the American college there. Like Haifa and Tripoli on the same coast, it is on a little point of land and faces north, protecting its harbour by a strong sea-wall, enclosing a deep basin.

In the East one looks out as the first preparation for any journey, what the Turk calls a "youldāsh," and the Persian a "hamrāh," or travelling companion. On this occasion and without looking for him, he appeared, in the person of a Konia Turk, who was staying in the same hotel. We were to leave at sunset for Aleppo by the train, and my fortunate meeting with him, though our conversation was perforce limited owing to my ignorance of Turkish, enlightened me to the fact that we should be twenty-four hours *en route*, and must take pretty well whatever we wanted to eat with us. So we made an excursion to the native bazaar, and from the sellers of comestibles in baskets, procured a large quantity of excellent oranges and some bread and various kinds of sweet cakes.

At six o'clock we hired porters and carried our goods to the station, a shed on the quay a few yards away, and having registered our luggage at exorbitant rates, apparently solely by the overwhelming condescension of a military-looking effendi of abominable manners, we

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took tickets—second class to Aleppo. So well do the French control their employees, that my companion found afterwards that he had been charged two medjidies excess on the luggage and one on the ticket, which the effendi and the booking-clerk doubtless appropriated. I escaped these impositions apparently owing to the attentions of a young Arab porter, who for some inexplicable reason took me under his protection, as he refused all "bakhshīsh" when the train started.

The carriage in which we found ourselves face to face, with our knees knocking together, filled up with ten other persons. As the rolling-stock of this masterpiece of French railway engineering is barely six feet high, and narrow gauge, the temperature rose swiftly with the odour of the occupants. The seats or benches, which I surreptitiously measured, are exactly fifteen inches broad, and in this vehicle we were to—and did somehow—pass the night. Our fellow-passengers were four terribly frowsy Italian employees of the railway, and six uniformed individuals. Turks away from the towns whose inhabitants are Turkish seem always to be uniformed, and it is hopeless to guess at their standing and importance, which is always to be assumed in one's intercourse with the officials of this eminently officious race. These individuals were of course all "effendis," and three of them wore swords, which may have meant anything, as from subsequent observations it seems even a Customs clerk has that right. Fortunately, they were too taken up with their own affairs to notice us, and we consequently escaped for a time the merciless curiosity which emanates from a Turk, private or official.

About four in the morning, after uneasy and very shaken sleep, we were turned out in darkness and desert on the metals. This was Rayak, where the broadgauge line for Aleppo branches. Fortunately our new train, somewhat more commodious, was ready, and we made a rush, our new quarters being less crowded. Having taken our places, and while we were yet waiting, a sound as of flustered people, just arrived, and fearing to miss the train,

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broke the stillness. The first train had departed and every one was seated, and we apparently were stopping to allow passengers a nap in perfect quietness. The noisy knot of people thus naturally attracted attention, but what was my surprise to see in this Turco-Arabian land the face of an Isfahāni, of Persia, look into our window, glance away at companions following, and shout in the Persian of his native town that there was room.

A small crowd of very worried Isfahānis clad in their national dress came running, and doubtless would have left some of their number in our carriage, but that several effendis pursued them and headed them off wherever they attempted to gain entrance. Most of them knew no Arabic nor Turkish, but were obviously bent on getting to Aleppo. Puzzled at the inexplicable attitude of the omnipotent effendis, refusing place to these poor strangers, who emphatically announced that they had paid their fare, I leant out and asked one in Persian what was the trouble. For a moment he seemed to be dazed, hearing his own language spoken by a fezzed Turk, but his ears at last convinced him, and he poured out his woes.

"Bah! la'nat ullah 'alaihim" ("God's curse upon them!") he shouted. "From Damascus we had second-class tickets. They put us and our women in a cattle-truck, these sons of Sunni dogs; offspring of Turkish prostitutes, and now they refuse us even that;" and even as he spoke I heard a raucous voice shouting in Arabic, "La makān ul 'Ajam" ("There is no place for Persians"), and in the hated Turkish, "Get desharda! keupek oghlu!" ("Get outside, son of a dog!")

The unfortunate men—pilgrims returning from Mecca they were—were hustled from door to door, cursed and reviled for heretics and Shi'ahs, refused room anywhere. No insult was bad enough for these unfortunates, no jibe too cutting.

Suddenly from somewhere a French official appeared, who had as little sympathy with Sunni as with Shi'ah Musulman, and he solved the question by tacking an extra coach on, wherein the Persians were accommodated, and

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kept separate, their quarters infinitely more roomy and comfortable than those of their oppressors; and so we started and fell asleep, to wake in the early sunlight at Baalbak, a place great with memories of the past, but all too quickly left behind in the present, when the train, that cares nothing for the worship of Baal, pauses but a few moments, and continues its way over rolling plains with low hills in the distance to Homs and Hama, two Arab towns, whose Christian population saves them from the decay inseparable from Turkish rule and Musulman subjectivity.

Within some hours of Aleppo, two uniformed officials boarded the train, and shoving aside a passenger—not uniformed—installed themselves. After a few minutes, one, a fat, squinting person, produced a dirty and ragged little note-book and commenced making marks in it, the while looking at the passengers as one who sketches. Having completed this mysterious operation, he passed it to his companion, who, after reading it, passed it back with a "Pekī 'alā" ("Excellent!"), and both commenced eating oranges, dropping the peel carefully under their neighbours' feet. For half an hour or so they were thus engaged, when one, looking at his watch, remarked that it was late, and departed swiftly out of the door and along the foot-board. Some time after, he reappeared by the same way, and seating himself, reproduced his note-book and revealed his identity. He was a police officer; his duty was to ascertain whether all the passengers in the train might be allowed to enter Aleppo without danger of their inciting political riots or committing crimes of all sorts. This was four months after the inauguration of the Parliament, four months after we had been told that the old restrictions on travel instituted by the Sultan and his spies were absolutely abolished as being an abomination and a relic of despotism and darker ages.

However, this particular effendi was apparently far above such laws, as I found out everybody else to be later on, and insisted on full information. There was an unfortunate German mechanic travelling to Aleppo for the

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factory of a merchant there; and because he was a European, I suppose, the effendi subjected him to every annoyance possible, affecting to disbelieve his statements, practically accusing him of being a criminal. His profession worried the policeman, too, and I think, probably, exposed ignorance caused the petty revenge he took, for when he asked the European's profession, he was told "Muhandis," an engineer, and did not know the meaning of the word. My turn at length came, and I was in some fear of uncomfortable queries; for to state that I was an Englishman would have been utterly disbelieved in a land where our countrymen travel only in first-class reserved carriages, wear "solar topee" hats, and are attended by servants. To call myself a Persian would probably have satisfied the man, but there was always that damning passport, and of course I did not know but it might be examined in Aleppo side by side with this creature's notes.

So, knowing but little of his Arabi and Turkish, I feigned total ignorance, indicating by signs that I was going to Persia, pointing to myself, the eastern distance, and repeating "B'il 'Ajam ("to Persia"). He asked me innumerable questions, which had I answered would have tied me up in a terrible confusion of contradictions, but at last, failing to get any reply from me he suddenly desisted, finding no amusement in the sport, I suppose, and passed on to a more intelligible victim.

About four o'clock in the afternoon we arrived at Aleppo, or rather at Aleppo station, terminus of that creeping railway, rejoicing in the extraordinary name of "Chemin de Fer de Damas Prolongement Homs et Hama."

To my surprise, no one asked for passports, the only annoyance was that second-class passengers' registered luggage would not be distributed for another hour. While receiving this information I was furiously attacked by a kind of hotel tout, fortunately the last I was to see, for I left both hotels and touts behind with Aleppo. However, I submitted to be thrust into a carriage and found myself

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careering along a straight, broad road towards the town, whose chief feature is the castle upon its flat-topped mound. Modern Aleppo is obviously an Arab city, the language is Arabic, French has not yet displaced it as at Beyrouth, while it possesses a few broad streets, where the badly written French signs of Greek, Armenian, and Syrian shopkeepers, photographers and hotel-keepers hang. The majority of its ways are stone-paved alleys between high walls, with the lattice-windows always associated in the Western mind with Aleppo. Beyond that it possesses a splendid bazaar, rows and rows of booths in the ordinary Oriental style, whose owners squat within, selling the European and native articles to be met with in all bazaars from Constantinople to Afghanistan. To him who has dwelt in the farther East, it comes like the first step towards the old country again. With joy I roamed through these busy alleys of shops, and purchased my road apparatus, candles, sugar, tea, tin and glass tea utensils, knobs of cheese, fruit, etc., of Arabs sitting behind rows of pendant sugar loaves and tin cans, entrenched among masses of heterogeneous wares.

In point of view of the antiquity of Aleppo, only excelled in Western Asia by Damascus (which after 3500 years of importance, still maintains its premier position), some note of its history is due.

That it was a city of the Hittites is witnessed by the inscriptions in that language within the citadel gates, and at present we know of no antiquity greater in Syria than that of this wonderful empire, that lasted for the enormous period of 3000 years (3700-700 B.C.), and of which there will be occasion to speak later. Though little, if anything, is heard of Aleppo in the ancient chronicles, it is so near to the ancient Karkhemish (Corchemish of the Old Testament), that it probably stood and fell with it during the wars with Assyria, which lasted from 1100-700 B.C., though no mention of it occurs in the stone inscriptions of Nineveh, Kalah, Kuyunjik, and Asshur.

In the storm of nations, Scythians, Cimmerians, Arabs, and—above all—Medes, that raged when Assyria fell,

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Karkhemish is forgotten and Aleppo is not heard of till Christian times.

It was probably converted to Christianity about the time St Paul sent his message to Antioch (Acts xi. 19-24), but it is in Muhammadan times that it really begins to play a part in Syrian politics. It was then the see of a bishopric, and was sufficiently important to be contended for in the early days of Islam, when a great battle was fought in the vicinity (A.D. 657). In A.D. 1056 the great conqueror Alp Arslan took it, and a century later saw Saladin defending its castle against the Crusaders. It fell, like all Western Asia, before the barbarian Mongols in 1260, and was sacked.

It has in more recent days produced many theologians and men of Muhammadan learning.

In the Turko-Egyptian war of the middle of last century, fighting took place there, the Egyptian army bombarding the city. A large barrack built by their commander, Ibrahim Pasha, still stands, to harbour Turkish soldiers, just outside the town.

That I was unable to explore the now empty fortress was a great disappointment, but even had it been possible, I could have learned nothing more than the many historians and archæologists who have visited it, and provided the reading public with every detail of its history, past and present. Besides this, Aleppo has been one of the best known of Oriental cities, particularly to English people, for here have lived and died agents of the Levant Company, and our Levant trade has ever had Aleppo for a prominent buyer.

Like Diarbekr, Mosul, and Bagdad, Aleppo lost much of its importance with the opening of the Suez canal, previous to which time it had been on the northern overland route to the East. Still, the advent of the railway, feeble as that is, has done something to restore it to its former importance, though the Turks, as everywhere else that they rule, have cast the blight of their presence upon it. At present it manufactures a large quantity of cotton cloth which is exported very largely Eastwards, and forms

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the principal dress material for the population of Southern Turkish Kurdistan and Northern Mesopotamia.

I had hardly been in Aleppo half a day, at a filthy place boasting the name of "Hotel de Syrie," kept by an Armenian—a fact which did not prevent Musulmans staying there—when a Turkish coachman turned up willing to take me to Diarbelr, the next big town on my route. I held out for two days' grace, but he, having clients at the other end waiting to be brought back, would hear of no delay, and so after a few hours I found myself mounted in one of those queer vehicles that ply between the cities of Syria.

The concern is rather like a punt on wheels. A wooden or canvas-covered top shelters passenger and driver, and curtains, when they exist, may be let down to guard the traveller from sun and storm. In this all the luggage must be placed, and comfort depends upon the skill with which things are arranged. Fortunately I had little, and putting my only trunk at the fore end I was able to re:ain a large square space, with a mattress under me to sit or recline upon.

Small articles like water-pots or samovars are tied on outside at various points, and there exist till broken or squashed, their almost inevitable fate. Commissariat has also to be arranged, for the supply *en route* is sometimes uncertain. Travelling light as I was, we only carried flaps of bread, some dates and onions. Fruit was unfortunately not in season in this month of March.

My coachman for some reason took me for a Haji returning from Mecca, and I found this such an excellent disguise, ensuring such civility on the road, that I was content to let it stand, till too late to change, and forthwith wound about my fez the white handkerchief which is a sign of the pilgrim homeward bound. We left Aleppo in our carriage thus one noonday, and a few minutes outside the town and over the ridge, one looked round and saw nothing but the yellow Syrian desert devoid of hills, the surface only occasionally disturbed by Arab villages, like clusters of anthills, the style of

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architecture as far as the Euphrates being all of the sugar-loaf pattern. For some hours our two ponies took us along the level track—there is no made road—till nearly sunset, when among a few mounds we suddenly came upon a village the natives call Bāb. Doubtless proximity to Aleppo may account for the excellent little bazaar, cleanly and good caravanserai, in one of whose upper rooms, overlooking the courtyard full of mules, donkeys, camels, horses, and sheep, I found a resting-place. Built of white stone, this caravanserai in point of comfort was one of the best I have seen in many years' wanderings. Design it had none—one block of rooms, some nine feet above ground, formed one side. Opposite were large stables, on the roof of which was the row of rooms of which I occupied one. The entrance to the caravanserai was the usual kind of deep porch with small chambers on either side, and above the archway of the entrance the enterprising architect had constructed two excellent rooms with glass windows, for the wives of wealthy travellers, opening on to a little fenced space of roof where they might promenade. The "khanchi" or keeper of the serai pointed to this with pride. The rooms, he informed us, were special accommodation for travelling pashas and such great game, and the chicken-run of a promenade was considered to be absolutely the last word in the progress of architecture.

The first experiences of travelling in native guise reveal many little things one never thought of before, when, as Europeans, we arrived at a stage, had our room quickly swept and carpeted, camp tables and chairs set out, and steaming tea swiftly produced. Certainly I did not have to sweep my room on this occasion, though subsequently I learned to wield the three blades of grass they call a broom in these parts. Water, too, the khanchi fetched. But my small belongings, which it was not safe to leave in the carriage, I had to bring up, and made several journeys up and down the narrow steps from courtyard to roof, laden with mattress, quilt, blanket, and

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the bags and bundles without which one finds it impossible to travel in the East.

Then I discovered that I needed tea very badly, so I had to go downstairs with my tin samovar, draw water from a well, fill it, and beg the lighted coal from a coachman whom I saw smoking a hubble-bubble. This done, I retired to my heights again, and after some time enjoyed a glass of tea and some dry bread.

At this juncture my coachman appeared, and expressed his astonishment that I had not followed the custom of travellers arriving in a strange place—to visit the bazaar.

This I had omitted to do, in fact had not thought of it. Now it was just sunset, I had no dinner to eat, the bazaar was closing; and worse, there was nothing, not even bread, in my bags for to-morrow's twelve hours in the desert. By this time I could get on fairly well with Turkish, but suddenly my coachman exclaimed, in a fit of geniality, "Az kurmānjī dazānam" ("I know Kurdish"!), and I found in a moment a new means of communication, for though I did not know the Kermanji dialect well, it is sufficiently near some others I did know, to be intelligible. I found afterwards that from the fact of my hailing Kurdish as an old friend, my coachman, who had been at some pains to find out my native place, a point always to be settled with one's travelling companion in the East, had at once registered me as a native of Persian Kurdistan. So with status as a Haji of Kurdistan conferred on me, I was introduced as such by my friend the coachman to all and sundry.

Here he proved a real friend, for he offered to show me the bazaar and try to get bread and some dinner before closing time. The bazaar was a small one, but fortunately there was a tiny cookshop, where exactly three kinds of very greasy pilau were on sale. From these I selected the least uninviting, and arranged for the proprietor to send a couple of plates of it to the caravanserai. We went into the village baker's, and there I found the great advantage of being, first, a Haji, and next, a strange Haji. At first the man, who was closing his shop, was very loth to

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serve us; but my guide, in tones of pained remonstrance, mentioned that I was a Haji, and the man hesitated, and finally began to throw bread into his scales. As a means to get full weight, Muhammad, the coachman, threw in the remark that I was a stranger from far away, knowing neither tongue, nor country, nor custom. The worthy baker, with a sententious remark upon the virtue of honouring the stranger and the acquisition of merit, threw in an extra piece and looked to me for the pious expression that was his due, and which I was fortunately able to supply in Arabic, much to his gratification. When we asked him the price, he actually told us the right amount without any haggling, and remarked upon the wickedness of harassing the stranger. This excellent attitude I found in many places, that is, wherever there were Kurds or Arabs. Turks are another race in manner and custom. I found my dinner waiting at the caravanserai, and invited my coachman to partake, for I knew that the humble station I occupied in the social scale was only equal to, if not lower than, that of a coachman.

With frank gratitude he squatted opposite me, and with our fingers we finished the mess. Previous experience in Persia had taught me how to negotiate semi-liquid dishes with a piece of bread and two fingers, or consume piles of rice without feeding one's surroundings. Also I knew the style of ablution necessary, and the formulæ of thanksgiving after eating. This latter was not called for on the road, for religious observance falls into considerable desuetude among the slaves of the desert track. Dinner finished — it took about three minutes—we shared each other's cigarettes, and as he departed to attend to his horses and I retired under a fold of my coat in a corner of the room, I felt that once more I was back in that generous and genial East that I had known before, so many hundreds of miles nearer the rising sun.

Next morning before daybreak we were up and on the way, and the sun rising showed us the same yellow undulating plain with now a range of distant hills to the

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north of us. We were not taking the usual track across the desert, which goes as a rule more northwards towards Birejiq, a town whose chief feature is a castle built during the wars of the Crusade.

Our way lay towards Membich, a city with almost the most ancient history of the Syrian desert—Karkhemish always excepted. We were traversing the lands which have seen the cultivation of the great Hittite nation that is said to have had its capital at Karkhemish but a few miles from here, about 3500 B.C., an age only excelled by Babylonia herself. From that time till the conquest of these lands by the Assyrians, some 700 years B.C., the king of the Hittites ruled over what was then doubtless a fertile country. It is about the Euphrates banks that some of the greatest battles of the world have raged. Hittite, Assyrian, Greek, Parthian, have all fought for Syria, and won and lost it; and Membich, that had a temple to the goddess Atergatis (of whom more hereafter), existed as a wealthy city, and stood for all these centuries, to be despoiled at the hand of a Roman plebeian, a place-buyer, whose ambition and greed eventually brought him to well-deserved ruin. This was Marcus Lucius Crassus, who in 54 B.C., in a campaign against the Parthians, "entered the shrine, carefully weighed all the offerings in the precious metals, and then ruthlessly carried them off."[1]

The town was not, however, destroyed, for it was ceded by Anthony, some twenty years later, to a deserter from Parthia, who, after holding it for a few months, once more returned to Parthia, leaving it in Roman hands.

To a field of ruined walls, piles of enormous carven stones, mounds betokening ancient buildings, we came that evening. Upon the highest mound is now a little mosque, and the place is peopled by a number of Circassian immigrants, who in their Cossack dress looked singularly out of place among the Arabs around them. On all sides are the remains of ancient buildings, stones too great to carry away. Their principal use to-day appears to be to

[1] Rawlinson, *Parthia*, p. 152.

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wall in the fields of grain, and when not too large for transport, to form new buildings in the dirty, squalid village, whose accommodation—three filthy rooms, all that remains of a caravanserai—is in keeping with the tone of the place.

Here we blessed the foresight that had made us bring some eatables from Bāb, for the surly inhabitants refused to supply anything but eggs, which were at the price of six for the equivalent of a penny. The water was bad, our supply being from a shallow well (just outside a particularly odorous cesspool), from which half the village came to draw water.

Since there was no bazaar to go to, nothing to do, nothing to buy and eat, I spent the time sitting on my door-step, for there were too many flies to share the room with, and nightfall and sleep came very welcome.

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CHAPTER III

FROM THE EUPHRATES TO THE TIGRIS, EDESSA (URFA), AND AMID (DIARBEKR)

THERE are, I believe, no remains in Membich of the temple of Atergatis which Crassus spoiled, and even at Karkhemish there is nothing but a mound unopened and kept closed by the Turks, to show where a great goddess, probably the greatest goddess of ancient times, was worshipped.

In reading the histories of Chaldea, Syria, Canaan, the Hittites, Israelites, Phœnicians, and Greeks, there appears as the chief goddess in their mythology always a goddess of victory, or love, and it is interesting to trace the course of this deity through the religions of the ancient East. The Chaldean race, which inhabited the lowlands, at the mouths of the Euphrates and Tigris, from ages far beyond our knowledge, had, from earliest times set up a goddess, "Belit," the lady, and it is from her that the later goddesses of other nations, or rather the later names and worship, sprang.

It is now known that the Hittites (for whose history the world is indebted to the wonderful research of Professor Sayce) were an extraordinarily powerful nation, that held the lands of Syria from about 3700 B.C.[1] to 700 B.C., when the Assyrians overcame them. During this period they came into contact with the civilisation of Babylon, and, long before the appearance of the Syrians as a nation, probably adopted the worship of Belit or Ishtar (the same deity), whose name they altered to Atergatis. The

[1] Ragozin, Assyria.

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worship of Atergatis was general among the peoples of Canaan (Syria), under the name of Ashtoreth, or Ashtaroth as we find it in the Bible.

The Canaanitic mythology also supplied a fundamental idea of male and female essence in Baal and Ashtaroth, with whom we are familiarised by the Bible stories; and this idea of the origin of fecundity and power, Baal, the God of all the living principles, according to the Canaanitic peoples, was the deity after whom the Israelites so often strayed; and Ashtaroth, the goddess of motherhood, love, and sensuality, necessarily was coupled with him.

Baal or Bel, or Moloch, the Sun-god, or Dagon, are all names of the same god, according to different tribes and peoples, who adopted this, probably the earliest conception of any worship of the supernatural arising from reverence of the sun and moon as the emblems of day and night, fire and moisture, heat and cold, light and dark, life and death, as twin gods of these antithetic phenomena—in short, the symbols of existence at all.

So we find the goddess Ishtar worshipped by the Phœnicians as Ashtoreth, by the Hittites as Atergatis, by the Philistines and Canaanites as Derketo, the fish-goddess (whose emblem and likeness was that of a half-woman, half-fish, as that of Dagon, the god, was that of a fish-man).

It was of course to these that the high places whereon they erected "Asherah," or places of adoration, were dedicated, and against them that the prophets of Israel were sent.

Thus we find Elijah sent against the priests of Baal (the Syrian version, the fire-god), who called upon their god, since he had in their mythology retained the first principle of fire, to send down that element.

However, Ishtar, or whatever one of her names we may call her, played a more important part in the history of Western Asia than the Sun-god himself. To her, temples were erected by all the nations worshipping, and she retained through all, the suzerainty over the planet Venus, her particular sign and emblem.

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Yet even among the Assyrians, who probably exalted her name more than any other nation, she bore a dual character, for we read that she had a temple at Nineveh and another at Arbela—a place dedicated originally to four gods. Now the Ishtar of Nineveh was essentially a goddess of love and luxury, who ruled the planet Venus; but she of Arbela gave victory in battle and strengthened the arm of the warrior.

It was at any rate a powerful and compelling religion this, that lasted through four thousand years of battles, of races that appeared, rose to importance and vanished, of peoples as little in sympathy with natural feeling as the Phœnicians and Assyrians, as the Hittites or Chaldeans. The worship of this goddess went on claiming homage from the mighty kings of the Hittites, the Chaldeans, and the Assyrians, keeping subject the host of nations, great and small, from Persia to the Mediterranean coast.

And now we are told that the Hittite kingdom extended to Ionia, and temples were erected to the goddess at Ephesus and Smyrna. Here came the Greeks as colonists, and, adopting the hosts of female attendants and priestesses as a basis, founded the legend of the Amazons. Not only that, but they adopted and adapted the worship of Atergatis, giving her a Greek name, under which she achieved a greater fame and commanded a greater reverence that any goddess of the pure Greek mythology.

And here, in this hamlet of Membich that was called Hierapolis during Greek supremacy, was one of the chief Syrian temples in the last day of her worship (54 B.C.). When this occurred, the Hittites had been gone into the oblivion of the past some 650 years, but the goddess, and perhaps her temple, an offshoot of the greater temple of Karkhemish, still stood.

For what we know of the Hittites we are indebted, as above mentioned, to Professor E. G. Sayce, who first announced to an astonished world of Orientalists and students, a great Hittite nation, the existence of which

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had been to that day—not two decades ago—absolutely unknown.

We now know that the Hittite empire lasted for the enormous period of about 3000 years.

The Chaldean chronicles mention them as a nation, in the date 3500 B.C. (*circa*). The seat of the nation appears to have been at Karkhemish, but before that they had been domiciled in the Taurus Mountains and the hills of Armenia, whence they descended, a hardy mountain race, to the lowlands of Canaan.

They were the descendants of Heth, son of Canaan (Genesis x. 15), and once settled in Karkhemish, where the chief temple to Atergatis was built (modern Jerabulus), extended their kingdom from the Bosphorus to the confines of Egypt, with whose Pharaohs they fought long and sanguinary battles.

Like all peoples in the East, even in the present day, they would appear to have been tribal in constitution, but their chief king was he of Karkhemish, with a lieutenant king at Kadesh in the south.

However, their might, long-lived as it was, fell before the onrush of the Assyrians, then but a young race, comparatively newly separated from the Chaldeans and Babylonians, and in 700 B.C. the last of the Hittite kings, who had been for some time tributary to Sargon, rebelled against his stronger neighbours, was defeated, and the last remnant of the Hittite empire, which had grown weak and dismembered, was destroyed and forgotten.

At Karkhemish, the capital through so many centuries of the Hittite empire, and chief city of the worship of Atergatis, there remains now but the great mound. War has again raged over the remains of greater combatants, for the Turks were defeated by the Egyptians there half a century ago.

Its interest to-day lies in the fact that the Bagdad railway is planned to cross the river just by the mound of Karkhemish, so we may look for bulky volumes in German some day, which will give us fuller particulars of this ancient city than we possess at present.

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We left Membich very early next morning, and *en route* discovered that several other carriages had put up in the place during the night; for both behind and before were rumbling, swaying vehicles, two or three full of luggage, and the rest carrying passengers. From Membich the country—as barren as ever—began to get a little hilly, and in the far northern distance we could see the Kurdish mountains in the province of Mamurat ul Aziz, at this time of the year well capped with snow.

For a few hours we got along at a good pace among the low hills, till we received a sudden check from a very steep place going down, and as we turned the elbow of a hillock, the Euphrates appeared below us, an angry, rushing river of very considerable width. By devious and dangerous ways we arrived at a broad foreshore, to find half a dozen carriages already arrived, and by the time the contingent from Membich had been drawn up there were twelve all in a line, the horses unsaddled, waiting to be ferried across by a craft rather like a high-prowed long-ship cut in half at the waist. Upon the high stern a man wielded an enormously long steering-oar and two or three others with poles and oars supplied a propelling power. But it was not merely a question of rowing across; there were but two landing-places, one on either side, and the current was of such a force as to render it absolutely necessary to tow the craft about a mile above the proposed landing-place on the opposite bank. Then, shoving off, everybody exerted their utmost strength to get the clumsy craft across the river, and if they were sufficiently quick and strong, they would perhaps hit the spot where the waiting carriages stood. If they came to shore lower down, there was of course nothing to do but tow back again. Necessarily the transit of a couple of carriages and their horses (the utmost capacity of the ferry), counting from the time another party had landed on the opposite bank, took two or three hours.

Our large party of passengers, seeing that delay would inevitably occur, were disposed to come to an amicable arrangement regarding precedence. Unfortunately we

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discovered that half the vehicles were hired by the Chief of Police of Urfa to transport himself, his goods and women-folk, and though he had—from what his fellow-travellers said—evinced no desire for speed so far, he now turned upon every one of us who talked of arranging an order of crossing, brandished his sword, and upbraided the company in general for proposing any such arrangement in his presence, which should be sufficient to give us the clue to all matters of precedence.

He would go first with all his goods and women, and whoever paid him would follow him in the order of the magnitude of their contribution. The Turkish and Armenian drivers seemed so effectually cowed by his disagreeable appearance and offensive manners, that most of them—ignoring his offer of precedence by payment—retired some distance and began to lunch, content to let him get clear away. Two cartloads of Christians of Urfa, however, intimidated by his continued attempts to extort money, paid and got away during the afternoon.

The remainder of us arranged who should go first, and, making the best of the hours we had to wait, composed ourselves to that which fills up so much of the idle time of the East—sleep.

It was nearly sunset before we finally got across, and found ourselves on the broad plain of the Euphrates valley. With all despatch we harnessed up and set out. Arriving at the caravanserai, we found it full of the effendi and his chattels, and the travellers who had followed him; so, making the best of a bad job, we went on, trusting to luck to find a place to sleep.

We had traversed the plain and were gradually ascending a pleasant hilly country by moonlight, when the driver descried a cluster of sugar-loaf roofs just off the road, and we stopped to interview the inhabitants.

A couple of finely built men came out, apparently Arabs, but they had not spoken half a dozen words to one another before we saw that they were Kurds. This resolved both the driver and myself to stay, for the Kurds, with all their bad reputation, are better hosts than Armenian, Turk,

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or Arab. Eventually, when a number of children and sheep had been dragged out from what appeared to be a cellar, they told me that the best room in the place was at my disposal. Descending three steps, and passing along a dark narrow corridor, I found myself in a circular chamber whose high sugar-loaf roof was invisible in the gloom undispersed by a tuft of burning brushwood.

The Kurds, with continual joking and merriment, tripping one another up, as they brought in the baggage, eventually deposited all my belongings in the room, and then installed themselves. The hamlet had a population of some fifteen men and women, and within five minutes these were all gathered around my strip of carpet. One of them knew Turkish, and tried it on me, taking me for a Turk; but when I replied in Kurdish, telling them I did not understand Turkish, they evinced considerable satisfaction, and hailed me as a brother Kurd, albeit of some other tribe (these were of the Milli), but nevertheless a fellow-countryman, and to be treated as a guest. And right well did these simple people act up to the fine old Kurdish law of hospitality. They possessed little enough of the world's goods, but their best fowl was sacrificed to the occasion, eggs in numbers sufficient for ten men were produced. Every one of them except the headman, who sat by as host, busied himself about something. One made a fire in the centre of the room, making gloomier the gloom with pungent smoke; another fetched water for washing—they would not let me go outside in the keen wind, to the spring. One heated water for tea, while his companions killed and plucked and commenced cooking the fowl. Surplus eggs they hard-boiled and put up for my journey next day. I felt ashamed to be imposing thus upon these simple and genuine people, only I knew that utter incredulity would have met any attempt I might have made to undeceive them. What could they think of a man whose only means of communication not only with them, but with the whole world of Syria, was Kurdish? I found, however, that the appreciation they evinced for tea and good cigarettes, luxuries unknown to them except

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by name, quite outbalanced my qualms. The unfortunate driver, who was subject to fits of surliness, finding his protégé in such a state of independence, gave way to a period of disagreeableness which the jibes of the Kurds did nothing to dispel, and finally retired to sleep among his horses' legs. As a race, Kurds are a witty and facetious people, great lovers of practical jokes; but I think these excelled any I ever met in this particular feature. The séance was one continual roar of laughter; despite their inquisitiveness, their personal remarks, their habit of fingering everything, the whole tone of their behaviour was too obviously ingenuous and well meant, possibly to offend any but Turks, whom they cursed and reviled, and made the subject of many unmentionable pleasantries. About ten o'clock the headman, a handsome fellow, doubly important in the possession of the village rifle, told everyone to clear out and let me sleep, and they retired, driven by the butt of the ancient fire-arm.

I was composing myself to sleep when a young woman came in, and began quietly to sweep the room with a bunch of twigs. Not unnaturally I sat up and regarded her with some astonishment, not lessened when she produced from a recess some bedding, which she put down beside mine. I was hardly in a position to make a remark upon her obvious intention to share the room, but the situation was saved by the appearance of one of my friends of the earlier evening. He saw me sitting up, and asked why I did not sleep, as if the proceedings which had just taken place were too ordinary for remark, and I learned in reply to half-formed questions that he was the house-owner, his wife the sweeper, and that owing to the size of the village, which possessed but two rooms fit to sleep in, they were going to spend the night beside me. This method of procedure was propounded by him in such a matter-of-fact way, and was so apparently quite the thing to do, that I could not, nor did I wish, to make any remark upon what was a purely patriarchal custom. What I learned was, that had I been a Turk or Arab, they would have told me to sleep in the carriage; but being a Kurd,

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and a guest, I must excuse their presumption in occupying the room, which was my exclusive property. The poor man even seemed somewhat ashamed at having possibly broken some unwritten rule of hospitality, but I did my best to put him and his wife at ease, and we literally lay down together.

I was awakened by the wife early in the morning; her man yet slumbered. She herself carried out the small luggage to the carriage, and then two or three villagers turned out and loaded up the heavy things. Last of all the headman appeared, and, as we drove away, the sound of his rough hearty farewells rang in my ears. These were the first Kurds I met, the outposts of a great race, that covers 125,000 square miles of mountain in Turkey and Persia, and who, despite the fact that their outlying tribes are but fourteen days distant from London, are the least known of any Middle Eastern race; albeit they are one of the bravest, most independent, and intelligent of all, cursed only by the black mark of the blood-feud, and a terrible propensity to brigandage.

The way to our next station was across an undulating plain peopled by Armenians, and sedentary Kurds of the Milli tribes. For miles and miles we rolled along between ploughed lands, where the grain was just beginning to send its green spikes above earth. From the north a keen wind came at a temperature obviously lowered by the snow on the hills, about whose shoulders rags of cloud were beginning to collect, to drench the land and the travellers therein but a few days later. In fact, rain had already fallen by the afternoon—when we found ourselves upon a dreary and immense plain of mud, sticky, clayey soil, into which the wheels and the horses sank. Our station, Charmelik, was visible in the far distance, a distance we seemed never to be able to reduce, for the sticky prospect spread out on all sides, and our speed was about half a mile an hour. Sudden showers began to fly round the country. One could count them as they descended from the hills, and progressing swiftly—columns of dark rain descending from dense black cloud-centres—

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did the round of the soaked plains, and apparently returned to the mountains and the solid mass of cloud that hung about them.

However, we did arrive at Charmelik at sunset, and put up in a little room. The village is a Kurdish one, and talk among the inhabitants was mostly of Ibrahim Pasha, the famous robber chief who held this country in terror for so long.

So bad a character was he, this outlaw (who adopted his trade in revenge for the Turkish treachery that brought his father to a miserable end), that Kurd and Arab alike disclaimed him; Kurd asserting that he was Arab, and Arab calling him Kurd.

The body of ruffians and thieves that joined him were of every class—Turk, Armenian, Kurd, and Arab. All served under his standard, and by his disregard for the property of any tribe or people he drew upon himself the enmity of his own kinsmen, the Milli Kurds.

But like every astute robber and scoundrel in the Turkish dominions, he bought the Sultan's favour, and could and did ridicule all the efforts of local government to catch him. For the most part he frequented the hills that border on the Mesopotamian plain to the north, but he was also a power in Viran Shahr and Harran to the south, where he kept everyone in a lively fear of him. Not until the Turks arranged themselves into a Constitution was this powerful brigand, by a ruse, caught and killed, and the heterogeneous collection of rascals dispersed.

The villagers of Charmelik related how his men would follow travellers into the village, instal themselves in the best room, order a meal, and having rested and smoked a pipe or two, stroll out, calmly load the traveller's effects upon his own cart and take them away to their nearest camp. So much were their reprisals feared—for revenge upon a village was burning and extermination—that not a single person dared protest. Even Turkish officers and officials had to submit to this treatment, and, so the reminiscent throng round the fire assured me, suffer a good beating in the bargain for being of the detested race.

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Altogether, Ibrahim Pasha's was one of the most successful and best organised of the Kurdish raiding parties, and numerically the most powerful. The only other combination, formed solely for the purpose of brigandage and revenge, was that of the Hamavand, whose acquaintance I made later, in southern Kurdistan.

We left this village next morning in a freezing cold, and the sun coming up, found us gradually ascending through gullies and defiles into a considerable range of hills. In that much-abused country, Persia, I have travelled many hundreds of miles by carriage, but I must in justice say, that the worst tracks in that maligned and unhappy country are paved boulevards compared to the carriage-ways of Turkey. Here, within easy distance of the sea and of the influence of Constantinople, the track passes untouched by any of the French-speaking, liquor-loving effindis appointed to look after such things; whereas in Persia there are excellent roads built by the foreign enterprise that she sometimes welcomes and Turkey discourages; and where the European engineer has not made smooth the way, the Persian himself, with no other notion than to ease the pains of travellers, has done his best, by clearing stones and putting down causeways.

For hours we ascended ravines, and slid, banging, down hill-sides, boxes and chattels of all descriptions almost taking charge despite their substantial lashings. Do what one might, inconsequent paraphernalia, eatables, small articles, would leap out and roll away, and one had the greatest difficulty in exercising sufficient restraint upon the overwhelming inclination to follow head first. For miles both myself and the driver walked, helping the wheels over rocks, piloting the carriage round corners of rocky zigzags, or helping the horses in desperate efforts to haul up slopes.

Here and there was a little patch of cultivation among the stones, and a spring made green narrow places in almost every valley. As we neared Urfa, our next stopping-place, ancient cave-dwellings, now unoccupied, began to occur, and bits of carved stone here and there

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lay about. In one flat plain, some two miles across, were the remains of a large square building, of the style one associates with pre-Muhammadan times, when mud did not enjoy its present popularity with masons.

However, our troubles ceased suddenly, for turning a particularly bad corner we found ourselves upon a very well-made road that continued all the way into Urfa. This is, I believe, the only made road in Syria, and was the outcome of a project to construct a military and commercial route as far as Diarbekr. The effort expired a few miles north-east of Urfa. Once upon this, we saw what would have been our fate without it, and I quite believed the driver's statement that, previous to its construction, the passes were not negotiable by wheeled vehicles.

On the way we met with a proof of the curious devotion that leads the Musulman from the remotest corners of Asia to Mecca. An old man, in garments that reminded me of Khorasan of Eastern Persia, overtook us, his stride taking him at a greater pace up the hill than our slow walk. I asked him, as a venture, in Persian where he came from, and learned that he was a pilgrim returning on foot from Mecca to Bokhara. His journey he estimated would have taken him nearly a year, from the time he started from his native town to the time he saw it again. He had the appearance of fifty or more years, but none of the feebleness that might be expected, and marched along—having that day done some twenty miles of mountain—as if he were just set out.

Beside the road, as we neared Urfa, there were, in bad repair, remains of an ancient causeway, the original road to the west from Edessa, as Urfa was known in pre-Christian days. Along the paved way of square blocks of stone the armies of the Roman and the Parthian had passed in the days when men worshipped Venus and Astarte.

Urfa, at the foot of this considerable range, stands upon some hillocks, and once the hideous dwelling of the Governor—built in imitation French style—is passed, the

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ancient nature of the town becomes evident. The peculiar blackness of the massive walls, whose ruins stand everywhere, the style of the bridges that span the ravine amid the city, the citadel mounds, topped with ruins of buildings all of that blackened stone, tell something of the history of Edessa. And in the hills above the light yellow cliffs that look down, are the innumerable cave-dwellings of the ancients, now occupied by nondescript families of sedentary Kurds.

We drew up at a large caravanserai at the edge of the ravine above mentioned, and I took one of a row of rooms upon its spacious roof, that afforded a promenade from which one could look up at the honeycombed hills, or view the clustered houses upon the hummock forming the Armenian quarter. Contrary to custom, the room, which opened upon the roof, and faced the courtyard, possessed glassless windows, looking down upon the street and a coffee-house. This is not enclosed, but is an extension of the actual coffee-room, the other side of the caravanserai. Along the moat edge, benches are arranged, and trees and matting shelters keep the sun off. Along the strip of road running between this café and the caravanserai walls the town auctioneers paraded every morning, selling every conceivable article, from a handful of cartridges to a horse.

Bids were made by the guests in the café as he passed and repassed singing out the last offer. In many cases his price not being reached, he would hand the horse, or whatever it might be, back to the owner and go on with something else, producing the under-priced animal next morning.

As in nearly all the towns of this empire, half the population of the streets and nine-tenths of all the café and corner loafers were effendis in uniform, who never by any chance appeared to have any kind of duties. In fact, Urfa, I was told, possessed a larger proportion than any other town of these undesirable fowl. Fortunately, they did not worry me: I was to learn their skill in annoyance later. Here the attractions of coffee and pipes apparently

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outweighed those of the possible piastre of the traveller. The population, apart from these signs of Turkish might, is composed of Kurds and Arabs, and an enormous number of Armenians. The Kurds come from the north, mostly out of the hills of Mamuret ul Aziz; the Arabs are from the plains of Mesopotamia, and probably have the claim to be considered the original inhabitants. The language is Kurdish and Arabic. Kurdish is understood by all, for it has forced itself upon the partially alien population as it does everywhere, displacing older established languages with its extraordinary virility and vitality.

The town is not a large one, but its bazaar is very busy, and its Government House always thronged with people. There is a square with a few trees, and the place is sprinkled with bits of old buildings, some adapted to modern use, and others built into new walls. Under the hills one is shown the Pool of Abraham, who is supposed to have performed various feats here. The water-supply is plentiful, the scenery around beautiful in its ruggedness and the fantastic nature of its hills, and I was told that there are very pretty gardens in the immediate vicinity. It is one of those places one sees so often in Asiatic Turkey, where life could be peaceful among beautiful surroundings and prosperity assured, were it not for the Turks and their misrule.

Urfa, or Edessa as the Romans called it, stood in Assyrian times upon the borders of Greater Assyria, and "the lands of Nairi," the highlands immediately to the north, which are now known as the western end of Kurdistan, and its name does not appear as a city till the time of the Roman invasion, when we hear of it as the capital of the country of Osrhœne, whose kings were always called Abgarus, according to the Roman mutilation of the Semitic name. The people were Arabs; and Edessa, while capital, marked the most northerly point of the kingdom.

At the same time the kingdom was on the northern marches of Mesopotamia, and always being in a position of a frontier state between Roman and Parthian, Arab and mountaineer—either Armenian or Kurd, though it is not

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known if the Kurds had spread so far west—was subjected to the fury of all its neighbours in wars, and played traitor to each on many occasions.

After the break-up of the Empire of Alexander, about the third century B.C., Mesopotamia fell into the hands of the Seleucid princes, and as they weakened, the northern portion of their kingdom fell before the advancing Romans. It was with Pompey (65 B.C.) that the king of Edessa, Abgarus, king of the people of Osrhœne, made a treaty, and accepted actual if not formal vassalage.

Ten years later, Crassus, as already mentioned, made his expedition against the rising power of Parthia, and was deceived and deserted by Abgarus after being lured into a position of danger. Thereupon Edessa became allied to Parthia, and incidentally saved itself from the destruction consequent upon conquest.

A century later, and we see the Parthian Empire torn over a question of succession: Meherdates, a Parthian prince, at the suggestion of Rome, proceeds to win his kingdom by the sword from Godarz. *En route* he passes by Edessa, and now the Abgarus, with a ready facility for duplicity, after feasting him, sets him upon a road he knows will end in disaster. His theory was fully borne out by the defeat of the pretender at Erbil.

After the death of this versatile monarch, little is heard of Edessa till A.D. 115, when the Emperor Trajan established himself there, in preparation for an invasion of Parthia. Edessa was a convenient spot for such a step, being within easy reach of the Mediterranean *vid* Aleppo, and commanding the road from Syria to the East.

Having prepared his army, he set out southwards; but while he subdued southern Mesopotamia, the reigning Abgarus, taking an advantage of Trajan's absence, promptly rebelled, and ejected the Roman garrison installed in the citadel, whose ramparts and walls still stand on the southern side of the city.

Vengeance overtook this effort at independence, for during the next year (A.D. 116), Lucius Quietus, a Roman general, captured the place and burnt it.

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Yet once more we hear of Edessa before it sinks into the temporary obscurity that followed the fall of the Roman power in Mesopotamia. In one of the last attempts of Rome finally to crush the Parthians (A.D. 197), Severus, who came from France to try and recover the territories (Edessa among them) recently conquered by Volgases V. of Parthia, found Edessa on his way to the East, and the reigning Abgarus, always ready to turn a complacent face to the man in power, submitted without a murmur, and handed over his sons to the Romans as hostages.

It was not perhaps remarkable that Edessa, after these centuries of strife between the great empires, that saw the ebbing and flowing tide of Assyrian, Persian, Greek, Roman and Parthian, Roman and Arab, sweep by and over it, possessed a population of which the Roman and Greek element, particularly the latter, was an important section. When Christianity began to spread, the proximity of Edessa to Antioch made it easy for the bishops of those early days to travel there, and so we find as a result of the efforts of converts a college springing up in very early times.

Though there were doubtless many of the Greeks in this college, we are told that it was the Chaldeans who founded it, and made it famous for its erudition, and particularly its knowledge of the medical science. Doubtless Chaldean, Greek, and Arabic were all spoken there; the last certainly, for Arab pupils of the college, natives of the land towards Mecca and Medina, were relations of the early Muhammadan saints, notably Abu Bekr.

This famous school was dissolved by Zeno the Isaurian,[1] and the Chaldeans, with no loss of zeal, transferred it to Susa, in Khuzistan of south-west Persia, whence the now famous missionaries of the Chaldeans to China were despatched.

In 1124 A.D. it had become one of the western strongholds of the followers of Hasan Sabbah, the Ismailis or Assassins of Crusading fame, and when they were finally

[1] Layard, *Nineveh*, vol. i., p. 249 *n*. Humboldt, *Cosmos*, vol. ii., ch. 5.

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stamped out, a large number were slain in Edessa, or as it was then called, Urfa; and since then it has taken an ordinary place in the scheme of the general history of Mesopotamia, acquiring evil notoriety recently (1895) for the terrible massacres of Armenians under Turkish instigation.

At Urfa I made the acquaintance of three characters, samples of the curious results of the shattering of races and medley of their remnants which has taken place over western Asia. I had noticed two or three times on my way from Aleppo another carriage with three occupants, and at Urfa found them occupying the room next to mine. Their appearance was remarkable. The eldest and leader of the party was a sinister-looking man, with a big hooked nose, and a huge mouth which opened at one corner to display the only two teeth he possessed. Upon his head he wore a turban, and an old overcoat and Turkish trousers, extremely baggy in the leg and tight at the ankles, completed his visible attire.

The next in importance was a Kurdish-looking fellow, dark, but with a humorous twinkle in his little eyes. The headgear was Kurdish too, the style affected by the northern races. A felt basin cap wound round with a blue cloth is the headdress of these people. He had adopted the peculiar form of head handkerchief usual among the mountain Chaldeans; that is, instead of making a regular turban, he rolled his cloth till it made a thick rope, and then twisted it round his felt cap three or four times. He wore also the hairy Kurdish zouave jacket and wide trousers. In fact, to the experienced eye he appeared a Kurd of the Erzeroum district. The third of this trinity was all that the others were not—absurdly fat, his hairless face formed a grinning moon under his tiny fez. As coat he wore a garment reaching a little below his waist, made of shot blue silk, and the bagginess of the upper end of his trousers exaggerated his already ample breadth to the point of ludicrousness.

These queer creatures, when in their carriage, spent a great part of their time chanting in Gregorian tones in a

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language neither I nor the coachman could make out. Now and then they would sing a Kurdish song or a little doggerel in Turkish. Their conversation was carried on in Arabic and Kurdish, which two of them spoke equally well; only the middle man, who appeared so Kurdish, confined himself to that language. At night, now, in the caravanserai, I had a chance of listening to the crew, and heard them talk in the Kurdish called Kermanji, in Arabic, in Turkish, and then in this dialect of theirs which contained a good many Kurdish words. This was distinctly tantalising, and next morning I made the acquaintance of the one I set down as pure Kurd. He was very hearty; we spoke in Kurdish, and I found that they had already ascertained from my driver that I was a southern Kurdish Haji. I now learned that they, too, were returning from Mecca, and were natives of Sert, a small town south of Lake Van. No sooner had I heard this than the secret of their dialect was out. I remembered tales the Chaldeans of Urumia and Dilman in Persia tell of the mysterious "Gavarnai," who come from inaccessible passes among the Kurdish mountains, Gavarnai calling themselves Christian, but often fleeing from Gavarnai who were Musulman. The solution of the Gavarnai question is as follows:—

The district of Sert and the Gavar (or rock) district of Kurdistan is one of the most inaccessible of the many sealed corners of this mountain country, and it was here that the descendants of the Chaldeans and Assyrians fled before the hordes of the Tatars in the early fifteenth century, finding an asylum among the Kurdish tribes.

Here in the beautiful valleys of Sert they settled, and many became Musulman among the Kurds. Others fled from Sert before the blood-feuds of their own kinsmen, who gradually learned from the Kurds a hardy recklessness and bravery unknown of their ancestors of the towns and plains, and pushed farther into the mountains.

In quite recent times the village of Khusrava, now a considerable town, was founded by a Chaldean fugitive or explorer from the Sert valleys, named Nicolai, about 1780.

This statement I put here upon the authority of a

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native of Khusrava, and leave it as it stands, not without remark, however, that the neighbouring town of Salmas was in pre-Muhammadan days a Chaldean bishopric, where there were undoubtedly a large number of Chaldeans among — but not intermarried—with the Armenians of that region.

The language of these Assyrians, sometimes called Neo-Syriac, or Aramaic, has remained and is spoken, though now known as a language of the Christians, by a great part of the sedentary Musulman population of the Sert plain, who, though calling themselves Kurds, are of Chaldean descent.

Such were two of my new aquaintances, the eldest and youngest. My particular friend, though he knew the dialect, came from a hill village, and besides proving his Kurdish origin also carried further proof in his appearance and manners. We became very good friends, and made many excursions about the bazaars of Urfa together, his tongue, always ready for badinage in any of four languages, assuring him a welcome everywhere.

At Urfa I renewed acquaintance with the Kurdish cigarette, which I suppose must be a unique pattern. The form has been evolved doubtless by necessity, for the tobacco produced in Kurdistan could never be rolled into an ordinary cigarette. Instead of pressing, keeping damp, and eventually cutting the leaf, the Kurds dry it, and pound it to a coarse powder, which to the uninitiated but intending smoker provided with cigarette papers would present an insurmountable difficulty. Consequently a special form of paper, affording employment in its manufacture to hundreds of women in Diarbekr and Mosul, has been invented.

The paper is thicker and coarser than an ordinary cigarette paper, and at least twice as long, and in the packets one buys they are already stuck together, forming slightly tapering tubes. A long slip of thick paper 1 inch broad is taken, and rolled into a plug which is inserted in the narrow end, its natural spring retaining it in place. Tobacco is then poured in from the top, and after sufficient coaxing and shaking down, the edges of the paper are

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turned in to retain the contents. The greatest disadvantage of this style of cigarette is that the tobacco being absolutely dry, and in tiny chips, does not hold together when smoked, the glowing head continually falling off.

Here in Urfa little else was smoked, and as I knew that eventually I must get used to them, I resolved to procure decent cigarettes as long as possible. So I hunted high and low for Turkish Regie productions, and at last found a dozen boxes, the purchase of which impressed my Kurdish friend immensely, for these are the one thing in Turkey of which the price is fixed and about which it is useless to haggle; also, compared to native cigarettes, they are terribly dear. These that I bought were twenty for threepence—still double and treble the price of Kurdish cigarettes. The purchase of these luxuries gained me the honorary title of effendi from my acquaintances, a title that never left me till I got buried in the frontier mountains of Persia.

We stayed two days at Urfa, and my new acquaintances of Sert were detained still longer. So, in departing, I bade them farewell till Diarbekr, where we should meet again.

From Urfa the road to Diarbekr keeps a mean way between ranges of mountains, the Karaja in the south-east and the high Kurdistan ranges to the north-west, called in ancient times Masius and Niphates respectively by the Romans. In many places the track brings one near the Euphrates, and traverses a number of ravines carrying down tributary streams. The general aspect of the country all the way is great rolling uplands, across which wind and rain come with express velocity and piercing cold. I believe the road from Severik to Diarbekr is impassable from December to February. Certainly when we passed in early April, snow was lying in patches not far away. The prospect is always immense, always dreary, for, though there is water to be got in any one of the innumerable gullies of these immense plains, and though the soil is fertile enough, the Turkish blight is upon the land. In the distance, more particularly to the north, are

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the sullen, frowning masses of the Kurdistan mountains, at this time of the year half hidden in black clouds, and before and behind apparently limitless plains rising gradually to the east, till at the highest point one looks down over the undulating desert with a curious feeling of being left out in the desolation of utter abandonment, unsheltered from wind, rain, and snow, and lost in the immensity of a silent death-like solitude of infinitely sinister aspect.

And these plains and mountains have from immemorial time been the boundaries, natural and political, of the south and north lands. The high dark range over north—Niphates we must call it, since to-day it has lost its general name—gives birth to the Tigris, the "Arrow."[1] It was also the northern boundary of Assyria under the first great Assyrian monarch, Tiglath-Pileser I. (1100 B.C.). Behind its frowning walls lay the mysterious lands of the Nairi, whom the Assyrian monarchs, greater than any of their descendants, succeeded in subduing, or found necessary to keep chastised periodically. The proudest boast of the Assyrian monarchs was ever that they had penetrated the lands of Naira and subdued their petty kings. And afterwards, the lands of Nairi were called "Gordyene," which is "Kurdian" or Kurds, no more and no less, a fact which supports the Kurdish claim to possession of the land ever since the first Aryan in the birth of time came forth from central Asia to people the West.

Here Roman, Parthian, and Greek invader have turned back and set their faces once more to the merciless plains and downs. Those gloomy hill-sides have looked down upon the broken armies of all the greatest Eastern nations, Assyria only excepted, and watched them as they crawled away, to the south and west, relinquishing all hope of penetrating the dread country of the fierce Gordyene, forbear of the not less fierce Kurd of to-day. Strange it is that this sturdy nation, whose name has stood for

[1] The name Tigris, which we adopted from Western historians, is the mutilated version of the Medic "tighra," modern Persian and Kurdish "tir," an arrow.

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rebellion, bravery, and untamable spirit, should never have taken rank among the more transitory peoples who never subdued it. Except that they were the Medes—or we imagine them to be—they have no claim to the historian's enthusiasm—at any rate, these western Kurds have not. They remain as ever, indomitable, invincible, proud, unsubdued, broken only by their own quarrels, hating the Powers that nominally rule them. Secure in their defiles and mountains, and in their archaic language, they cede no jot of their exclusiveness, let the West press never so hard.

This digression from narrative is permitted, I hope, by the lack of detail worth recording about the road from Urfa to Diarbekr. Except that for the first half, for two days, the fiendish genius of some Turkish engineer has induced him to scatter boulders and call it a road, and then lay down 3 feet of clay on marshy ground, and call that a road too, the track calls for no remark. There is but one station of any interest, Suverek.

Referring to notes, I find that two objects struck me as remarkable when approaching this squalid town upon the plain. One is a square white building, with rows of glass windows all round, a porched doorway in front, a Turkish flag on top. This is the Governor's house, an example of mean European architecture, isolated, from the small surroundings that give it a spurious importance, looking cold, miserable, hollow, and infinitely shoddy, in that vast landscape of plain and distant hill. The other feature is the mound, like that of Aleppo, upon which are the remains of the Governor's house that the rulers of twenty centuries ago put there, for whose might and whose right, and whose strong hand the country may sigh as it looks there upon the work of a mighty past, and here upon those of a little present.

Modern Suverek is a mean town of one-storeyed houses of black stone, inhabited by sedentary Kurds and Armenians, who are, I believe, permanently on bad terms, as these two races always are. There are no streets as we know them; the hovels are clustered together, leaving

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alleys of a particular filthiness between. The traveller perforce puts up in a ruinous caravanserai which is situated fortunately on the edge of the town, and looks out through its broken doorway to the desert. The people are peculiarly surly and ill-mannered, and despite the size of the place nothing seems to be purchasable. When we arrived it was quite within the nature of things to find all my sugar finished, and so, leaving my room in charge of an aged Arab woman I found cupping herself outside in the courtyard, I set out to explore. My first question to the Armenian who acted as doorkeeper, elicited the fact that there was a shop round the corner. So round the corner I waded through pestilential mire, and found the shop. It was an open booth—the shop of the East—and the stock-in-trade just required three glances to sum it up. There was a small boy playing with a grey-hound. Behind, upon a sloping shelf, a bag of stones, called cheese in these parts, where last year's cheese is a delicacy, and the fresh article scorned. Two bunches of onions and a few boxes of matches completed the emporium. So I took my trousers up one more turn, and set forth among the alleys, displacing Armenian infants from mud-baths, disputing the right of way with armed Kurds, and finally finding myself in a mosque courtyard, where I was promptly accosted by a priest, who asked my religion, and receiving the answer "Islam," still doubtful, called upon me to be repeat the creed, which done to his satisfaction I made use of him as a guide, and with his assistance found a shop similar to the first, where the owner was more enterprising and kept not only sugar—and sold at a fanciful price—but tea and cigarettes.

Bread, too, I found, but solely by the priest's goodwill, for, taking compassion upon this strange Haji, he took me to someone's house where bread was being cooked in an earth-oven, and procured for me ten flaps for two-pence.

Fortunately good water was abundant in the court-yard of the serai, where a nozzle poured out a plentiful

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supply, filling a broken cistern and half the yard. Hither came all the Kurdish women to get their supplies, and I spent an hour sitting on my door-step watching for an ugly girl—and saw none. We had great difficulty in getting away next morning, for the Armenian keeper of the place demanded a mejidie (3s. 4d.) for horse provender from the coachman, and 1s. for my room, which had leaked upon me all night. An hour was wasted in the doorway disputing. Half a dozen Armenian loafers hung upon the horses' heads while we endeavoured to quell the screams and expostulations of the keeper of the place. We were forced to pay in the end, or stay where we were, the only satisfaction being that we passed off a bad five-piastre piece upon them, and gave the trouble of changing a lira. And so we drove away, cursing Christians and pagans in general and Armenians in particular.

Next day we had crossed the high plains and got into the warm desert towards Diarbekr. As we approached, the black walls rose above the horizon, and occasionally the gully where the Tigris runs would be apparent, the yellow of the cliff face showing against the duller colour of the plain. Approaching from the west, Diarbekr is not beautiful nor remarkable. In the middle of a great desert, the river, too, hidden by its cliff banks, Diarbekr appears as a citadel of black stone without any green or vegetation. Nearer views revise the unfavourable first impression, for on the slopes and the lands by the river banks, there are splendid gardens, which in this month of April were dressed in all the delicate hues of blossom and new leaf. The fine bluff upon which the city stands, looking up and down the river, is, of course, invisible from the west, facing the rising sun as it does.

My driver told me to prepare my passport, for he assured me we should not be allowed to pass the gates through the walls without showing our credentials. So I produced my passport and got it ready—that traitorous document, proclaiming me English, British-born, and Christian!

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I began to wonder how the "Kurdish Haji" would look if questions were asked of the driver, to whom by now I had employed so many pious Musulman expressions and ventilated such orthodox sentiments, besides conducting myself in the manner of any other travelling Asiatic, that I knew he would swear to my Islamism. Not only that, but the police would certainly never believe that I was a European, my style of travelling, the only language I knew well—Kurdish—being convincing arguments against such a possibility. So it was not that I was afraid of being found out, but that I regarded with some trepidation the possibility of being accused of having stolen another's passport, a very heinous crime indeed. English passports and European correspondence would serve me little among people where Europeans are very rarely seen, in places where the Englishman seldom, if ever, travels, and never in such guise. The weather, too, had done its best to disguise me. I was darkened by wind and sun; nine days' black beard scraped the chest left bare by a buttonless shirt. My trousers were muddy and torn, and I wore a long overcoat, very much like the robes of any of the myriads of Turkish subjects who affect a semi-European dress.

There was no alternative, however; one could not stop outside in the plain nor enter unperceived, so we drew up just outside the gate in the massive walls at a police post, and an official demanded my passport. I handed it to him, and held my breath. The coachman who had seen this done a thousand times, and took no interest fortunately, seized the opportunity to descend and buy some cigarettes at a shop near by. The effendi, unusually civil for his class, asked me where I came from, and by what route, and where I was going. Hearing that my destination was Mosul, he seemed to lose interest, but produced a pocket-book and prepared to note particulars of my passport, when I observed that he held it upside down and made illegible marks in his book, and I realised that no art of the Constantinople passport clerk could betray me, for he was utterly illiterate. He asked my name, and

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still fearing eventualities, I repeated my own name very indistinctly, which he aptly transliterated as Ali as-Sūn, after which all was plain sailing, for he presupposed that I was a Haji, which the coachman confirmed, and I let him know I was a British subject, the supplementary fact that I was Persian-born being supplied by the driver, and so with a polite good-day we passed on.

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CHAPTER IV

DOWN THE TIGRIS TO MOSUL

DIARBEKR at first sight strikes the stranger as a remarkably clean, bright, busy city, with streets unusually broad for the East, enormous bazaars, not roofed as in other Oriental cities, but merely rows of windowless shops lining the ways. Two main thoroughfares intersect the town at right angles, with gates at each end, and the whole is surrounded by the huge wall of basalt built in its present form by Justinian. The population seems for the most part Kurd, wild men of great stature, from the north and east, with high felt hats, like those of the ancient Persians of the Sasanian sculptures, their zouave jackets of sheepskin with the hair outside, the scarlet shoes forming parts of a distinctive costume. The fierce look that a Kurd invariably acquires, the thin bony face, the long stride, mark the hillman, who walks in these peaceable, if noisy, streets with a hand on his rifle and dagger.

We put up in a two-storeyed caravanserai, near the north gate, a place clean and roomy, boasting the luxury of glass to its windows, one or two of which contained a chair and table. These were not for Kurdish Hajis, however, and I humbly took my upper room, thankful that I had a window whence I could survey the lordly effendi as he crossed the yard to his "European" room. Upon the board floor (another luxury this, in a country whose floors are of mud) I spread my rag of carpet and threw my bedding, and, following the coachman, retired to a coffee-house outside for a cup of tea, and the ordeal of questions that pour upon the stranger.

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The coffee-house was a big barn-like place, black with the smoke of innumerable water-pipes, and furnished with broad benches, just too high to sit on and let one's feet touch the ground. They are, of course, made to be squatted upon. The place was very full, and we had to squeeze in on one already occupied; and I found myself next a holy man, a yellow individual in the long cloak denoting a priest, and the green turban that is the sign of a Sayyid, or descendant of the Prophet. This sanctity of course called for greetings from us, the plebeians, the insignificant, and with humility we tendered our "Salamun 'alaikum," receiving the "'Alaikum as salam" in sonorous tones before we sat down.

The first questions came quickly enough.

"Whence do you come? whither going? what nationality? why travelling?" which were answered by the responses I had resolved to adhere to.

"From Aleppo to Persian Kurdistan, a Shiah Musulman travelling back to my country."

This I said in Kurdish, for the man was ignorant of Turkish, which became less known as we went farther east.

Himself he was an Arab, a native of Mosul. In the lands of Islam, where knowledge and religion are inseparable, it is the divinity student that becomes the doctor, the lawyer, the judge. This priest was by profession a petty lawyer, and gained a kind of livelihood by settling disputes. To this he added the profession of healer of scorpion bites, which he remedied by applying to the wound the oil extracted from the black scorpion. Conversing pleasantly of this science, he produced a cigarette box and played with the lid as one who waits to finish speaking before taking a smoke. He ceased his dissertation upon scorpions, and nonchalantly opened his box, to display two large scorpions writhing within and scraping their horny legs and claws against its tin sides. He lifted one out, disregarding its furious blows upon his fingers, let the reptile crawl up his arm, picked

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it off, replaced it in the box, smiled at me a toothless and sinister smile, slipped off his seat and left the café.

My coachman had watched the performance. He knew the man well, he said; he had practised his trades in Diarbekr for years, always a buyer of good black scorpions at fourpence each, and a seller of the oil at a mejidie for ten drops. His remarkable performance with the live scorpions was possible owing to his practice, when catching scorpions, of nipping off the sting of the tail with a pair of scissors.

There was a fresh briskness, a hearty feeling in the air of Diarbekr, that took the fancy. The new springtime exactly achieved that mean of temperature wherein man feels at his best in the Mesopotamian plains, that scorch the life out, and make the strongest languid during the long summer.

The place was crowded and busy; the Kurds, released from their snow-bound mountains, were coming in to buy summer clothing; the Armenians, who are the craftsmen of Diarbekr, were enjoying a period of immunity from the terror in which they often exist.

The broad street of the town, that lets in the breeze and the sun, gave it a cheerfulness in that season that many another town, whose winter mud is just beginning to congeal in dark alleys, lacks.

I took the earliest opportunity to get outside the north gate, which was but a few yards from the caravanserai door, to inspect the curious stones that are embedded in the walls, stones bearing images of birds and beasts, relics of a wall that perhaps encircled the city during pre-Christian times. Yet with all the evidence of importance, with its old church towers turned to minarets, where the bells that called to the worship of the Trinity are replaced by the call of them that cry to the Indivisible Unity, where Roman ruled later than in any other city of the East, and where the Christian was predominant till Islam, borne upon the shoulders of Arabs from the south, drove him out and subdued him: with all this, Diarbekr has

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figured less in the ancient annals than many a village and mound that to-day passes unnoticed.

All the nations that passed over the lands have fought for and owned it. Assyria knew it not by name, though if it existed then, it was an outpost of the empire. Armenians, Persians, Parthians, and Romans fought over it, but the chronicles tell us little. In Christian times the Persian leader Kawad (Sasanian) practically destroyed it; in A.D. 507 and in A.D. 1124 seven hundred persons of the Assassin or Ismailia sect were massacred. It fell into Turkish hands in A.D. 1056, when Tughril Bey of the early Seljuq dynasty captured it.

It was not on the main road from Syria to Babylon, nor Europe to Persia; the hosts of invaders and defeated passed too far to the south, and left Amid in her corner, where she trembled at the noise of the battle that sometimes ruined her. Tigran, one of the greater Parthic-Armenian kings, took the place when he subdued Gordyene, upon whose southern borders it still stands, and he built a capital a little north of it, ignoring its claims to importance.

The present city has, as already described, four gates in its massive walls, but the Turks have knocked out a wicket gate in the north wall, and called the Yengi Qapu, "The New Gate." Also, a Turkish governor, offended at the sight of so substantial a monument of a race greater than his—and pagan—attempted to destroy the architecture neither he nor all his kind could ever emulate, and succeeded in defacing a portion of the north wall. Demolition of such a monument, however, proved too great a task for this mean vandal, and he desisted, and has gone his insignificant way. A few of the old churches still exist, which, in my character of Muhammadan, I was prevented from viewing.

The modern population, apart from the Kurds and Mosul Arabs, is composed of Christians, of whom there are more varieties than in other towns of Asiatic Turkey. The Armenians are in the majority, and form the whole of the large section engaged in the manufacture of copper

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vessels, for which Diarbekr is famous. There are Greeks, relics of the rule of Byzantium, divided into three or four sects, Syrians, or Christian Arabs as they prefer to call themselves, some belonging to the Syrian Church and others Catholics. There are Chaldeans, who glory in the assertion (never disproved) that they are lineal descendants of Nebuchadnezzar and the later Assyrians, speaking an ancient dialect which is nearer to the inscription-language than any other.

The Roman Catholics have been busy among all the sects, notably among Armenian and Chaldean here, and many of both own allegiance to the Pope. Every sect—and none can tell how many there are—is as certain of its own particular salvation as of the perdition of all the others, and a hatred reigns over this Christian "centre" among the various kinds of Christians that puts in the shade any length of the detestation for Islam.

It is unfortunate that the Asiatic Christian is, as a rule, a very undesirable creature, more bigoted than the most fanatical Muhammadan, of a craft and infidelity seldom witnessed in other lands, and of an attitude towards his co-religionists of different tenets that can be only described as traitorous. It may be reckoned a heretical statement to put forward, but the dweller in the East is bound to confess that among the greater part of the peoples of Western Asia, Islam produces a better man than Christianity. The temperament of the middle Eastern Semitic is ultra-utilitarian. The ideals that Christianity puts before him have too slender a hold upon a nature that craves for the substance, and the latitude allowed in daily life by the Western faith accords ill with the temperament that seeks set rule and law, that may govern the manner of his rising and sitting, of his eating and sleeping, and by the observance of which he may accumulate the merit that may secure to him the acquisition of ideals almost mundane. The high soul and spirit required by Christianity is too far above these material minds, and the hazy and ill-understood ideal cannot hold their endeavours as do the needs of life and the almost unconquerable cupidity

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of the Semitic nature. So we see the spiritual and intangible, the higher head and sign of their religion lost sight of, in the struggles that rage about leadership of their minor saints, and points of doctrine and dogma that tear asunder the Christian community. Islam is material, her ideals are powerful and simple, there is through all that unification of leader and led that all can appreciate. One God, one Prophet, one Book, each in its own rational relation to the other, a simple doctrine, powerful in its direct appeal to the unity, a leader, a prophet who lays down with the despotism understood of the ancient Semitic spirit, law and letter for all things; that is a creed that the Arab mind sees as tangible, if such an expression be permissible; a law for all and a reward attainable by the observance of its well-defined canons, demanding not too much of the man in his daily life, yet holding him—as all who know the East must know—with a mysterious and invincible power that calls upon his life when it wills, and finds it ever ready for the sacrifice.

Persecution has doubtless made the Christian crafty and distrustful, and is often quoted as an excuse for the many undesirable qualities he possesses which the Musulman does not share. Alone among these Christian sects stand the Chaldeans of the north, whose pride of race and tongue has done something to keep them above the Armenians, Syrians, and Greeks they despise, and to preserve alive in their breasts the sentiment of the ruling race from whom they profess to spring, and which saves them from many a littleness which is an integral part of the nature of the other Christians.

The persecution of the Christians—of which Diarbekr has too often been the theatre—excites the sympathy of all nations, and rightly too; for whatever be their quibbles, they hold fast to Christianity through all the massacres and terror that Turkish vindictiveness has incited and paid for. I say paid for, because it is, among the underworld of western Kurdistan and northern Mesopotamia, a common subject of talk in the cafés how much the Sultan and the Government paid the ruffians of the

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towns to do their dirty work, and how much the Kurdish Aghas presented to the authorities to be allowed to finish unhindered the blood-feuds that existed between themselves and Armenians sheltering in Diarbekr and the towns of Armenia. A very reign of terror overshadows the apparently peaceful and prosperous town.

None ever know when the Turks will permit the looser part of the Musulman population to slaughter, or call down from the hills those terrible Kurds that hold Christian and Musulman alike in fear.

It is impossible not to notice here the universal law that forces the weak to imitate the appearance of the strong, as a protective measure. The Christians of Diarbekr and the outlying country have adopted the dress of the town Musulmans, the long tunic and the waistband, the felt cap surrounded by a blue handkerchief, to such effect that the stranger cannot distinguish one from the other at first, and only learns to pick out the slight difference in the arrangement of the head-handkerchief after some time.

So too at Mosul, where the Christians and Muhammadan Arab are not visibly different, except where the former has adopted a fez; and in southern and Persian Kurdistan, where Kurd and Chaldean dress precisely alike, and where the Chaldean speaks perfect Kurdish, and, happy to relate, is usually on excellent terms with his ferocious neighbours, who have none of the detestation for them that they have for the treacherous Armenians.

From Diarbekr I purposed to travel as far as Mosul down the Tigris on a kalak, or raft of skins and poles. The few Europeans who have adopted this pleasant method of travelling, usually hired half the raft, erected a booth or tent and carried a cook and servants, travelling tranquilly, with no more to do than admire the scenery and take snapshot photographs. In my assumed character I could not go in for this style of luxury, and had to look out for a passage by a kalak carrying cargo, upon the top of which I might be allowed to sit, for a consideration.

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However, I was to have a tent after all, and it came about thus :—

I was eating my frugal lunch of dry bread and lettuces one day in the caravanserai, when an aged man in the long garments and felt waistcoat of a southern Kurd came up to my room, and entering with a salutation, sat down, and accepted my invitation to share the meal. He introduced himself as Haji Vali, a native of Erbil, on the western marches of Kurdistan, a Baba Kurd, returning from his seventeenth journey to Mecca. He, like me, sought a passage to Mosul, and came with the news that a kalak was ready; and, moreover, possessed a shelter of sticks and calico which had been made for an effendi now unable to travel, and which could be bought for a mejidie or so. The old man knew a little Persian, and spoke, besides his native Kurdish in which we conversed, Turkish and Arabic. The assurance with which he had joined me at my meal, and the certainty he seemed to feel that I should become a partner with him in our passage to Mosul, I found a feature of all his doings.

He had an abrupt, dictatorial manner, which he tempered with bluff heartiness, and, used to the respect which his seventeen journeys to Mecca had earned for him, was not accustomed to receiving a refusal to any of his propositions. So when he proposed to me—whom he called Musa—addressing me as "his beloved son," that we should share all expenses, I agreed. No sooner was this settled than he departed, to return later with his goods and chattels, some being saddle-bags, and little sacks of charcoal, a tin samovar, and a packet of letters and papers which he entrusted to me, as being more secure in the pocket of my overcoat; for in the fashion of the long tunic of the East he possessed no pockets, but two wallets hanging at his sides, and must needs thrust any valuables in his breast. The kalak owner now appeared with the Armenian doorkeeper as witness and intermediary in the negotiations. This kalak owner was a gaunt Kurd, pretty well seven feet tall, a cadaverous-looking giant who, squatting on the ground, seemed an ordinary man's height. An

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impediment in his speech and a single fierce-looking eye make him a fearsome-looking fellow. He was very easy to haggle with, though, and started by demanding six mejidies for transporting us to Mosul, we to be allowed to use the tent, which should become his property at the journey's end. We held out for five mejidies, and half the proceeds of the sale of the tent at Mosul. Eventually, after the consumption of many cigarettes, and after he had three several times risen and got half-way down the stairs in apparent indignation at our inflexibility, with the Armenian as disinterested go-between, we arranged on the price of two mejidies each, the tent being the Kurd's property. The kalak was to start next morning, and we must transport ourselves and our belongings outside the town to a spot where a stone bridge crosses the river some mile below Diarbekr.

In the meantime we must purchase food for some days; the journey, if we received no checks, would occupy five days, but if high winds arose or much rain fell we must be resigned to twelve days or even longer. So we visited the bazaar. First to a baker's, where we ordered a sack full of thick flaps of bread, that he would cook by noon, and half toast besides, making them as it is called, "firni," which prevents the bread going mouldy. Then to buy sugar, at which operation my knowledge of "European"—as Haji Vali called an ability to read Latin characters—was needed, for the Armenian shopkeeper tried to pass off upon us as "English sugar" some inferior produce of Austria, and his surprise and Haji Vali's delight were about equal when I exposed the fraud by reading the label.

To buy anything was a great nuisance. When I was alone I never had the patience to beat the seller down to the last farthing, and would pay an eighth of a penny more for an article than its proper price; but old Haji Vali would have none of this. He knew the price of everything in every city from Medina to Bagdad, and woe betide the Christian who swore to a false price. At last, however, we actually did finish our purchases, which, if I remember, were as follows: a sack each of charcoal and bread, ten

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pounds of rice, one pound of tea, three sugar loaves, six pewter teaspoons, seven pounds of clarified butter, odd quantities of lentils and pease, three long strings of dried "lady's fingers," a little vegetable; pepper and rock salt; some dried fruits. These we carried to the caravanserai, bent double under the sacks and bags we shouldered. The purchase of these things took us from nine in the morning till nearly sunset, and involved as much talking and argument as a session of parliament.

Having locked up our purchases and tied up our goods, ready to be taken away next morning, we went out for a last look at Diarbekr; but the old man, sick of bazaars, surprised me by a request, unlike what one would expect from one of a people that usually expresses so little regard for the aspect of things natural, and the beauties of the world we live in.

Taking my arm, he said:

"Musa, my son, after the day's toil, let us go outside the gate to a quiet spot among the trees upon the cliff, where we can sit and look upon the view."

So, very gratefully, I consented, and we took our way by the gate, turned to the right, and passing the hideous military school, came to the cliff that overhangs the Tigris. We descended a little by a footpath, and found a clump of trees on a narrow ledge, whence, sheltered from the view of passers above, we could look out northwards, across the plain, and to the ever dark hills of Kurdistan. The old man sat silent for a long time, but at last expressed his sentiments in one long "Allahu akbar!" ("God is great").

And then he pointed out to me the beauties of the great rushing stream, the vivid colouring of its yellow banks, and the light green of the groves of trees that sprang with a new year's life far below us.

Again he sat silent, and gazed with narrowed eyes at the far mountains, and when he spoke again, it was the soul of the Kurd and of the mountaineer that threw the harsh words of his dialect from his tongue:

"God! and God! and God! He, the Indivisible, His

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glories are manifest to our eyes, and His mercies to our hearts and minds. Yet my son, think not that these mountains—upon which the body roams, while the soul, soaring above, meets the Unknown in a medium pure[1] as the snow-field that stretches above—are His masterpiece. For verily, as these mighty hills are the greatest of His works here, yet they are but as the pebble upon their flanks compared to His works in Heaven.

"See this work, how it exists. Who are we to boast of the power He gave us, Who takes it away after our four days of transition? See these city walls, the great among us made them, and they shall fall in a space of time incalculably small in His sight, yet the stones of them are His handiwork, and long enduring, have endured, even as those hills. And when the walls shall sink, one, building the sign of his ambition with the ruin of another's, shall use these same stones, remembering the former builder of walls.

"Ah! that he forget not the Maker of the stones that last, and the hills that endure."

The old man spoke quietly, yet as he spoke, the blue eyes dimmed and the voice shook—indeed there are anomalies in this world, dual personalities, among the sons of the East that one never suspects.

This old man, who had spent his life in an occupation we should deride as hypocritical—for he was a guide to Mecca, and while overcharging the uninitiated, achieved spurious merit—had yet in his old heart a spot where the poetry that lives in the Aryan breast yet lurked, and emanated, ascribing everything to that fearful Omnipotence that the Muhammadan worships.

In the Persian I have often met this dual personality—the hard, cautious man, who descends to any trickery and deception, even crime, for the meanest ends, and in a revulsion of feeling reviles himself, sees himself as others see him, in the purest poetry of language and thought

[1] He used the words "Sā o spī waki wafraka lasar" ("Smooth and white, like the snow above").

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expresses the most beautiful sentiment, and falls to earth again.

The mountains, always the mountains, held the old man's gaze. There is a fascination about them that it is not necessary to be a Kurd or a Persian to be able to acquire. The impassive monuments of old-time glacier and volcanic upheaval, relics of convulsions that rent continents, that rise straight up from the flat, broad plains, may well seize upon all that is impressionable in anyone, and inspire the dullest with that craving to penetrate the mysteries of their deep valleys, and view the world from their blanched heads.

Truly, Diarbekr, that looks out from its fine bluff upon the lands of four old empires—Assyria to the south, Armenia to the north, Media to the east, and Rome to the west, might have much to meditate upon, were it allowed time for meditation between the continual rebellion and persecution that tear it.

Sunset, that meant gates closed, forced us to return, and once within the gates, Haji forgot his mood, and recommenced his talk of the journey, of the prices of our various purchases, of the unscrupulousness of Armenians, and the exaction of the Turks, who sent up the price of everything.

Next morning early we roused up, and while I went out into the streets to find a porter, Haji busied himself arranging the goods for carrying. A sturdy Kurd, whom I found in a mosque yard, arranged to carry our things for five piastres (10d.), and we loaded him up with a box and the saddle-bags, upon which we cast our bedding. The rest we must carry ourselves, for Haji, who would spend as little as possible himself, would not allow me to waste a coin where it could be saved.

It took us a little while to convince the Armenian keeper that a couple of shillings was enough for five days' occupation of his room; but this once done, he helped to load us up, and at length we departed. Haji's load was the sack of charcoal, and a bag containing the rice and some sundries, while I shouldered the bread and suspended

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from myself bags containing tea and sugar loaves, odds and ends of all descriptions, and a charcoal brazier that picked pieces out of me wherever it struck its many sharp corners. The whole length of Diarbekr we struggled, for the south gate was our first objective, and not till then did I realise the size of the place. The straight street ran on as it seemed to infinity, but the gate (so like the gate from Winchelsea to the Romney marshes) did appear at last, and by some extraordinary providence the police did not worry. The sun was getting up at the pace he always does in the East, which I am sure is greater than anywhere else, and we sweated and panted as we waddled along, bent double under our loads. The porter, with the strength of his kind, outdistanced us, and with his steady march was soon lost among the trees that border the winding road. Haji's breath gave out here, and we had to rest, but at last we did get to the bank of the river, and threw our loads down upon some bags of apricots that were to go to Mosul.

And now, since we are arrived at the kalak, a description of the ingenious craft is necessary. Briefly, two hundred inflated goatskins arranged in the form ten by twenty, are bound to a few thin transverse poplar trunks above them. Over these again seven or eight more tree-trunks not more than 7 inches thick, are placed crosswise, and upon these, to form a deck, is placed a layer of bales. Between two pairs of these bales a basket-work affair is fixed, which, with a stake, forms a rough thole-pin. A pair of enormous sweeps swings on these, and the oarsmen, standing upon one bale, build a bridge of twigs across to the next row, and wield the sweeps standing. Under the sweeps an empty space is always left across the raft, where the skins are visible between the rafters.

The raft, from its shape and construction, cannot be propelled, and the *raison d'être* of the oars is for turning, by which the kalak is directed into the right currents, and to pull the craft out of the danger that rocks standing in the stream often threaten. In the upper river, between Diarbekr and Mosul, particularly during the springtime,

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progress at night is impossible, for the side-currents which sweep round the rocky banks at the velocity of a galloping horse would hopelessly smash the raft. Wind, too, naturally exerts a great driving force upon a craft that draws but three inches of water, and its strength, too much for oars to fight against, often compels a halt.

When we arrived, Kurdish porters were loading up the last of the cargo, dried apricots and rice mostly, from round about Urfa. The crew were busy blowing up partially deflated skins with a tube which they inserted into a protruding leg of the skin. Our tent, or "tenta" as the Arabs called it, was wedged between two walls of bales, and entering, we found it had a plank floor laid over the tree-trunks forming the raft.

We had two fellow-passengers—one an Arab merchant of Mosul, a man of tremendous piety, who spent his whole time smoking cigarettes and calling on the Lord. The other was as diametrically opposite to him in character as possible: a time-expired soldier, a youth of twenty-three, who was returning from the Hejaz Railway, where he had formed part of the military police guard, to Kirkuk, his native town. Foul-mouthed, blasphemous, a thief, possessing no money and expecting us to keep him, he was a type of what the Turk becomes when the army has moulded him to its standard of ruffianism.

The crew of the raft was composed of two Kurds, little men of the Zaza, a tribe that lives in the high mountains round the upper Tigris valley and headwaters. These people are different in appearance and manners from nearly all other Kurds. They are short men, of a shy, quick temperament, very sharp, and excellent workers, speaking a dialect which, while Kurdish, denotes by its form a very high antiquity. It is possible that these are lineal descendants of the hill-tribes that the Assyrians had so much trouble in controlling, and whom the Parthians and Romans of a later age never subdued. In the high, pointed felt cap and long-toed shoes they still preserve part of a dress familiar from the sculptures of the southern Armenian mountains.

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The skipper of our craft was known as one of the most skilful of all the river men, and in the dreadful weather that followed he showed by his ability his claim to that reputation.

We cast off from the bank at ten o'clock this sunny morning, a light breeze from the north both assisting our progress and keeping the temperature at a degree of perfect comfort. Under such conditions, fine weather and a broad river that runs at a steady pace without too many shallows and rapids, there is probably no more pleasant method of travelling than by kalak. As it proceeds, the raft turns round and round slowly, giving a view of every side.

There is an ease and comfort about it all that only the traveller fresh from the road can appreciate. The abundance of cool, clean water is the chief delight of the journey, contrasting with the ever-present trouble of the road, with its water often enough scarce, and always obtained only at the expense of considerable manual labour. The dust and filth, the long, wearying stages, the trouble of loading and unloading and of seeking food in obscure bazaars when one is dead tired, the awakening from a sleep all too short in the dark before dawn, all these are past, and all there is to do is to lie at full length upon the bales and give oneself up to the luxury of pure laziness and enjoyment of the view.

For two days we floated down between flat banks, passing a few villages, all Kurdish. At night we tied up, gathered some sticks, made a fire, and cooked rice. Haji and myself were regarded as the first-class passengers, possessing, as we did, a tent, and living upon cooked food. The others had but dry bread and cheese, of which they had brought a sufficient supply to last. As the custom of Islam generally, and of the Kurd particularly, demands a fraternal fellowship among all travellers, we entertained the passengers and crew at our evening meal every night. The class distinction that asserts itself in every land on earth, whether it be the difference made by breeding, position, or hard cash, became apparent on the first evening. I had cleaned and washed the rice, boiled it, and

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produced a pilau, turning it out into our one dish, which was but a big copper saucepan-lid. We invited the company to partake, refusing to eat under any other conditions. The crew, however, were too shy, and asserting their own unworthiness, said they would eat afterwards. The Arab merchant, too, hung off with polite phrases, but was eventually forced to join. The soldier needed no encouragement, and would have sat down and begun without waiting for us to put out our hands to the dish, a terrible gaucherie; but for some reason both Arab and Kurd, who had conceived a strong dislike to him, fairly beat him off, saying that he was not of our class and rank, and might wait and eat afterwards. So, with very bad grace, he retired to sulkiness and cigarettes. A hearty appetite, helped by the pity-to-waste-it kind of sentiment, assures the total disappearance of a cooked meal among all the people of road and river in the East, so there were never any leavings, and the washing up of the one dish was always undertaken by the crew. Morning and afternoon, we made tea upon the raft, precedence in the dispensing of it being strictly observed. First myself, for all had given me the title of effendi, on the strength of a fez and overcoat, and regarded me as the aristocrat of the party, then Haji Vali my partner, then the Arab, and after we had each partaken of the regulation three glasses, the crew received their two, the soldier getting his share last of all.

The third day, great mountains began to rise high before us, stretching away across the course of the river, far to the east and west. The second night we tied up at a Kurdish village just before reaching some high cliffs that were the sentinels of the terrific gorges we were to pass later, and here our luck turned. First we learned that a section of the Kurdish tribe in the hills we could see ahead had rebelled, a quite usual occurrence, and to show their defiance of authority, were shooting at passers-by on the river. This was certainly disquieting, but a prospective danger is sometimes dwarfed by present discomfort. In the pouring rain that set in at sunset, we forgot all about robbers and rebels. A strong gale arose, with torrential

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rain, which wet our tent through, threatening to tear it away altogether. The Kurdish crew, who feared to leave their craft to the mercy of a wind and ever-strengthening current, that might carry it away and shatter it against rocks, were bound to sleep aboard, and in a piercing cold they lay sodden, rivulets running from their thin garments, and tried to sleep. We in the tent were not much better off. All our bedding got soaked, thick cotton quilts which take hours to dry; our rice and charcoal became pulp and mud respectively. Streams falling from pools in the calico roof spouted upon us, now on our faces, now in the nape of our necks. Pools formed upon our coverings, and soaked through. Our clothing could absorb no more, nor our bedding, and at last we, like the unfortunates outside, resigned ourselves to becoming shivering bodies wrapped in spongy swathings, our only advantage over them being a little shelter from the stinging wind. In the black darkness we had to crawl out over bales of apricots, slippery with the juice and wet that oozed from them, to secure our flimsy house: every few moments a new place had to be found for such valuables as matches, whose ever-changing refuge was invaded by the rain with a malignant persistency as regularly as we devised it.

Morning brought us no relief, and indeed made our case worse, for had we stayed at the village we could have taken shelter in its houses. By an irony of the elements, the wind held off at sunrise, and despite the rain we cast off. An hour downstream, where it narrowed among the hills and ever-rising cliffs, the wind swept down again, and we tied up by a strip of beach under a precipice, and so cut ourselves off from any chance of shelter. For three days and nights it rained and blew. Even our bread, the only thing we had to eat, became sodden. Haji developed rheumatism, and a temper so irritable that I migrated to the bales outside, and slept two nights upon the apricots, covered by soaked and clammy things that, while they kept the wind off, were so chill as to make their advantage problematical.

The fourth morning, however, broke fine, and in half

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an hour the clouds had torn to rags, the wind had gone overhead, driving the rack at a tremendous pace; but below, the river ran blue between its yellow cliffs, now a good two hundred feet high, and we steamed in the welcome warmth; and now we saw how the three days' torrent had altered the condition of affairs. Our mooring-stakes were a couple of feet under water, and the river, which from here runs in a gorge through the mountains—a gorge ever narrowing—was flying along at express speed. Our courageous skipper cast off, and we commenced to race along. The river pursues a remarkable course here. The reaches are straight and short, and owing to the similarity in colouring of the opposite banks it is impossible to see the turn—often less than a right angle—till right upon it. Huge hills rise up beyond their lower slopes covered with trees, and above all we could see snow-capped peaks. In these wild gorges, of a beauty of spring verdure, of a magnificence indescribable, we felt—as in all effect we were—but a chip swept along the great river. At every turn the current, setting towards the far bank, would sweep round, roaring against the vicious-looking rocks, and all hands were called to the oars to keep the raft from dashing upon them, and being torn to pieces. The river, narrowing between points sometimes, or running over submerged rocks at others, breaks up in high curling swell, and the current doubles its speed. Here we would experience the greatest excitement in guiding the raft to the exact centre of the converging ridges of waves and shooting through between them at a tremendous velocity, to rush upon the boiling commotion where they met. The raft would undulate, its non-rigid construction prevents its rocking, and waves would roll up, drenching us and our goods, and our half-dried garments, while the raft cracked ominously. At such points Haji and the Arab merchant, grasping the nearest firm object, would ejaculate fervently, "Ya Rebbi! Sahl! Ya Rebbi!" ("Oh God, help! Oh God!"), and passing the danger spot, utter equally fervent thanksgiving. As we proceeded, the hills and cliffs got higher and steeper, great mountain sides rose at a slope

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apparently impossible to climb, to dizzy heights. Here and there would occur a narrow point of land, around which the stream curved, and upon every such was a little Kurdish village, the house of the head-man, well built of stone, with a loop-holed tower standing up on slightly higher ground. Once or twice shots were fired, but our pace took us far beyond the reach of the sports-men, almost before they could reload. Seeing these great hills, these constant precipices, it was easy enough to understand why the armies of the old Powers of Mesopotamia in their marches northward always took the westerly plain roads, and left these hills to the tribes that have inhabited them ever since Central Asia poured out its hordes of Aryans far back in the years before history, to people the Western world.

One afternoon, when we were favoured with good weather, we turned into a long reach, and had before us one of the most remarkable sights the Tigris has to offer. The right bank of the river rose in a vertical cliff to a great height, and was faced across the broad stream by fellow cliff not so high, but honeycombed with cave-dwellings. The right hand cliff (which was the result of a hill-side cut off by the river) was broken at one place and continued again, the ravine—but a few yards across—coming down to the water's edge. Upon the summit of this continued portion we could see a considerable town, so high up that human figures looked minute. Behind all, rose precipitous hill-sides, between whose gorges and valleys could be seen yet wilder crags and peaks. In the village or town two or three towers, narrow and tall, of the dimensions of a factory chimney, rose, looking more slender and high from the eminence upon which they stood. But most remarkable of all were the great piers of a once colossal bridge, that, springing from a lower point of the cliff, or rather from a spot upon its slope down to the foreshore, spans the space to the opposite cliff, bridging the Tigris further south than any existing stone bridge. Here the stream is broad and deep, and the mighty piers that tower above and shadow the passer-by in his humble

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kalak, speak volumes for the perseverance and talent of people past and gone, and, by comparison, the qualities of the Ottomans. And on both sides, on the left or east bank, where the cliff growing ever lower still hedges the river, and on the west, where receding it leaves a fertile foreshore, the faces are pierced with cave-dwellings, rock forts that communicate with one another. Curious chambers, open at the river-side, mere eeries, looked down upon the stream, and it is only a near approach that reveals the mode of access, a passage diving into the rock. From the village above a staircase has been cut, zig-zagging down the cliff-face to where the river laps the solid rock wall.

This remarkable place, far off the track of any road, removed from even the feeble influence of the Turk by its surrounding mountains, is called Hasan Kaif. The name is modern, and tradition says that Hasan Kaif[1] was a Kurdish brigand who established himself there and levied toll upon all river passers, fortifying himself in a place that hardly needs any artificial protection, so well has Nature fenced it about. The bridge is said by most people to be Roman, but later experts than those who started the theory—for want of a better—state that it is Venetian, a relic of the old road to the East. In fact, I believe traces of Venetians have been found also in the town, where there are ruins. It is probable that the Venetians knew the place by reputation and history before they ever established themselves there. The population has probably been always Kurd, the Armenians that existed there before the Armenian massacre having immigrated. Now the Kurds have the place to themselves once more, and under the superlatively corrupt and feeble government of to-day, its old reputation has returned. Here, too, are some Yezidi, those ingenuous souls that, instead of attempting

[1] This legend is unfortunately flatly contradicted by the spelling of the name. Hasan is not the name with which all travellers in Islamic lands are familiar, but an Arabic word signifying an "impregnable castle," a name obviously suited to the old castle on its cliff. Oriental students will appreciate the difference on learning that the second consonant is Sād, and not Sīn.

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to curry favour with the Almighty, regard the evil power as more potential in this life, and seek to appease Satan, which perhaps comes to the same thing in effect upon their daily lives. We did not stop here, but allowed ourselves to be swept past, down a wide reach where the hills opened out, and at nightfall tied up where the river grew tremendously broad and turned sharply to the right.[1]

With night rain came on again, once more drowning us in our garments and coverings. So much water had the cargo absorbed that the raft had apparently sunk. At the start the skins were half out of water and had to be constantly sprinkled with a spoon-like instrument of leather, to prevent drying and cracking, but the last two days they had been invisible, and now even the covering beams began to disappear. The apricots, soaked by the first rain, had swollen and grown pulpy, a day's sun had partially dried the outsides of the sacks, and induced a most unpleasant effluvium. Now everything became full of water to its saturation point again, and on this occasion a freezing wind arose, the reason for which we perceived at daybreak, for the hills were covered with new snow.

We cast off at the second hour of daylight, and floated out into a lake of swift-rushing eddies, crashing commotions of meeting streams. Here the Buhtan Su—the largest of the streams that go to make up the full Tigris—enters at a broad place, a bay among some abruptly rising hills. For a mile or so the reach of the combined rivers sweeps along broad and deep, then is forced to take the only possible outlet through a narrow gorge, between where the speed is positively giddy. As we approached the turn, a number of Kurds appeared, running down a valley to the river, and as they neared opened fire upon us, hitting nothing

[1] The old Arab name of the place was Ras ul Qawl, and it was in the 11th and 12th centuries under the government of Mardin. It was ceded in A.D. 1263 to one of the Kurdish tribe of Al-i-Ayub (the tribe of Saladin, famous in the Crusades), which was itself related to the great Hakkari tribe residing in these districts. The place has been in the hands of this family and its descendants ever since. Apparently the castle is of a much earlier date, though we are told that the Al-i-Ayub tribe rebuilt it.

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but a bale or two; but their attention was diverted most opportunely by another party, which, appearing on high, commenced a lively fusillade directed at our assailants. Very unfortunately we were not in a position to stop and watch the developments, but as we were hustled round a bend we saw that a brisk fight was in progress. It interested me very much to note the behaviour of my fellow-travellers. The crew seemed to think the affair very ordinary, and never ceased rowing; in fact it would have been impossible to relinquish control of the raft in this corridor full of rocks. The Arab and Haji, too, while very careful to take shelter behind bales, knowing that we must soon be carried beyond reach of danger, were very little perturbed, only the Kurdish blood of the older man boiled to think that he had not a gun to respond. The Turkish soldier disappeared at the first shot, having wedged himself in among the apricot bags and the rafters, whence he at length emerged wet and muddy.

We were not to go far that day, for rain and storm came on again, and we had to tie up; but the morning came fine, and despite the precarious condition of the raft, which was now floating under water, we resolved to go on as far as Jazira, a small town at the foot of the mountains, and reached there completely water-logged, and sinking deeper every minute, a little after noon.

Here our crew were paid off and another couple taken over; the process of handing over being to count everything on board, passengers included, when the new man, entering into possession, looked around and was expected to carry out all necessary repairs, or rearrange cargo and passengers as suited. He wasted no time, and plunged into the chilly water, pulling out deflated skins, blowing up others, replacing faulty ones, and tidying up generally till sunset.

We were to have started next morning, but again the weather came on, and a worse downpour than ever drove all the loafers away and left us forlorn upon the beach, whence we retired to a hole in the ruined wall of the old citadel.

Jazira, or Jazira ibn Umar, once important, is now but

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a large and excessively filthy and ruinous village, peopled by Arabs, Kurds, Turks, and Christians of various kinds. Its importance is evidenced by the existence of some police, and we were soon made aware of their existence.

When we first arrived, as we were short of a few odds and ends, I went and explored the bazaar, which is good and well stocked, considering the size of the place. There is also a public bath, into which I put my nose and fled. The bazaar sells rope (for which the place is locally famous), dates, desiccated cheese, dried fruit and raisins, and the usual imported articles. I wanted dates, I remember, and had a curious time getting them, for the inhabitants, mostly Kurds, would not believe that I was anything but a Turk, fez and overcoat being inseparably connected with that race in the minds of a people who dress in peg-top trousers of native cloth, shirts of the same, and felt waistcoats.

I had acquired sufficient Turkish to speak by now, but Kurdish came more easily off my tongue, so at the first shop I reached, where I saw dates exposed for sale, I asked the price in Kurdish, and was answered in Turkish. Mentioning the price I professed to be ready to give, I received the assurance of its impossibility in Turkish, with an assertion, not made without pride, that the speaker knew that tongue.

"Very good," said I; "but I don't."

"How? do you only know Arabic, then?"

"No, I don't know Arabic; you must talk Kurdish."

"Where do you come from?"

"Diarbekr and Aleppo and the cities of the West?"

"And don't know Arabic?"

"No, nor would I speak it if I did, to a Kurd."

"Then you must be a Kurd, but your language is not ours; where is your country?"

"My country is one you never saw—Persia."

"Persia!" he exclaimed, and shouted to his neighbours, "Here is a Persian!"

Several collected about, anxious to see me, for it is a curious fact that anywhere along the Tigris above Bagdad

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no Persians exist, nor ever come, and are greater strangers in this out-of-the-way corner than a Greek.

There was soon a small crowd around, and ignoring my need of dates, the heartier ones took me off to a café, and I was kept there for an hour or two answering questions about Persia, and learning a little about Jazira, the chief feature of which was, according to them, the bridge of boats which crosses the river during the summer only, and a hill upon which the Ark is said to have grounded on its way north to Ararat.[1] I at last escaped, and having purchased dates and rope, was returning to the kalak, when I met our late skipper, who sought me, to say good-bye, as he was returning on foot to Diarbekr.

I was proposing to give him a penknife I possessed, but he saw he had nothing of equal value, and would only accept a handful of dried dates, in exchange for which he gave a cake of sweet bread. He had just received his pay for five days' hard work, which required skill, experience, and probity, the sum of two shillings. No wonder people employ Kurds in preference to lazy and incompetent Arabs and Turks.

The third day an extra row of skins with three more rafters was added to our raft, and half an hour before we were supposed to start, eight soldiers of a Turkish

[1] There is practically no doubt that the story of the Ark's journey is as inaccurate as that of Jonah and some other incomprehensible narratives of the Jewish chronicles. Sir William Willcocks, whose work in investigation of ancient waterways in the Euphrates valley will soon achieve fame, has practically proved that Noah was flooded out in an exceptional season that inundated the whole of the flat plains of the lower Euphrates and Tigris, a district now flooded regularly every year. The Ararat upon which he landed was Ur of the Chaldees, situate upon a mound which, above the waste of water—which in flooded seasons looks like an illimitable ocean—would have appeared a considerable eminence. Futhermore, and completely refuting the possibility of a journey to Ararat, is the fact that the strong prevailing wind which blows, has blown for thousands of years during springtime from a northerly direction, would have kept Noah south, even if we can disregard the fact of the rush of water southwards to the Persian Gulf, to say nothing of all the high mountains of Kurdistan and Armenia between Chaldea and Ararat

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regiment from Kharput calmly walked on board, knocking the captain overboard, for he would have protested. These creatures, by their behaviour and subsequent cowardice and brutality, disgusted us to such an extent that had we foreseen the annoyance their folly and bestiality would cause, I think we should have all got out and walked from Jezira to Mosul.

However, we were trying to coax them to sit in such positions as would not endanger the raft's equilibrium, when upon the ruined wall above two uniformed persons appeared, and a third, who came aboard with a confidential serious air, told us the police required us. Haji, the Arab merchant, the soldier, and myself, climbed the wall and were ordered in a surly manner to produce passports. The others had not theirs with them, but mine was ready, and I produced it, hoping that affairs would pass off as easily as at Diarbekr.

Not so, the policeman read the whole thing, then turned sharply upon me, and informed me that I had stolen an English tourist's passport, that I was obviously an Oriental, or why this method of travelling, this dress, this acquaintance with Kurdish. In vain I protested, and he asked me my name. With horror I heard the voice of Haji, just arrived, answer :

"This is Musa Effendi, a Persian gentleman, for whom I vouch; my very good friend and comrade, a good companion, and a devout Muslim."

The policeman folded up the passport with a triumphant air, and directed his two men to take me to the police office. A sudden thought helped the situation. "I am a British subject," I exclaimed; "touch me at your peril; thank God we have a consul in Mosul who awaits me. If I do not arrive, there will be the devil to pay."

And heartily glad I was that the passport supported the statement of British subjectivity.

"Then how comes it," said the policeman, who never doubted that I was a Muslim, "that you do not bear a Muhammadan name? and are described as Protestant? which all know is a kind of Christian?"

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The feeblest bluff saved me; perhaps they distrusted the truth of the details written there.

"As to the name," I said, "the English law recognises only surnames; if you are a native of Mosul, are you not called a Mosulli wherever you go? are you not known among strangers as 'the Mosulli'? so I am described as of 'Elisun,' which is my native place. As to Haji's assertion that I am Persian, why, that is right enough, are there not thousands of Persians born British subjects? and God knows why the Kafir, the heathen Armenian clerk of the passport department in Constantinople, called me Protestant, except that seeing I was an English subject, imagined that, as the English nation is Protestant, I must be also of that schism."

The chief policeman thought it all strange, but I received unexpected assistance from his lieutenant, who had apparently been to Constantinople, and, to air the fact, asserted that he knew well the English habits and laws, and that what I said was quite possible. My now almost silenced assailants had yet one more kick left, and it was obviously quite his trump card.

"Then if you are English by subjectivity," he regularly shouted, "produce your English passport."

I did so, amid the silence that such a curious and formidable-looking document produced, and it saved me. Without a word the Turkish "tezkere" was handed back to me, and feeling now doubly triumphant, for I had proved the disguise of language, manners I had adopted, almost too perfect, and had, at the same time, demonstrated to a crowd of unattached roughs and Turks, that bullying could not extort from me the money which was the sole object of the policeman.

Half an hour later, Haji and the Arab merchant came back, cursing the Turks. The old man had a passport which had been handed him when he left the army thirty-five years before, in the days of Sultan Abdul Aziz, and had been forced to pay a mejidie because it was so old. The Arab had a similar document, and paid a similar sum.

With a feeling of great relief, that even the presence

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of our eight soldiers could hardly quell, we cast off and commenced our journey to Mosul.

A few words are necessary here of Jazira. It was occupied for a long time by the Romans, who built the citadel, but before that its position at the entrance to the mountain system of Masius gave it importance as the outpost of the city of Nineveh, in Assyrian times, an importance it retained till quite recently, when Turkish influence has killed it. The ill-fated pretender Meherdates passed here in A.D. 49, on his way south, and the Emperor Trajan, a century later, made it a depôt for the wood he cut in the mountains, to build ships for the invasion of Babylonia, then in Parthian hands. We are told that it suffered much at the hands of wild Kurds, and later it has been the scene of many bloody battles. For many years it was owned and ruled by the Khans of the great Hakkiari tribe of Kurds, and was a Chaldean centre while they ruled there. In the world of Oriental literature it claims a position as the birthplace of Ibn ul Athir, a great Arabian historian, who was born there A.D. 1230. To-day the mixed population has a reputation for roguery, treachery, and lawlessness.

Here begins the great plain, which, occasionally broken by insignificant hills, at last, below the Sinjar range south of Mosul, drops to the dead level of the Mesopotamian plain, which, unrelieved by even a mound, stretches right away to the Persian Gulf.

The passage from Jezira is usually, in springtime, reckoned as two days, but we were not to be so fortunate. Our raft, very heavy to row, presented a large surface to the wind, and the day after leaving Jazira, a strong breeze drove us against the bank. We struck with a terrifying crack of tree-trunks, and some skins burst, no serious damage really occurring. It was sufficient, however, for the army. With one accord, crying out curses upon the river and the wind, they rushed to the edge of the raft nearest shore, and despite a 5-foot bank, past which we were skimming at a high speed (for we had not stuck), they leaped off, leaving coats, shoes, and food behind. Two or

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three had near escapes from drowning, and all got partially immersed in the icy water. Scrambling to the top, they attempted to pursue us, screaming to us to stop—in their folly imagining it possible—but the thorns and the pace at which we went, soon convinced them of the uselessness of haste, and they desisted and were left standing in the desert—and blaspheming.

We had not come off quite unscathed. A corner of the raft was badly broken, the loss of skins allowed a considerable portion to sink under water. Moreover, a thole-pin was wrenched out of place, making rowing very difficult. Worst of all, the current became very swift, and we could find no place with water sufficiently slack to allow mooring. Till sunset we had to go on, when a fortunate side-current—out of which we foolishly tried our best to row—took us round the corner to a quiet pool, and we tied up on the bank opposite to that of the soldiers' desertion.

All night we spent repairing, taking shares in the labour of walking into the water and bringing ashore the heavy bags of apricots—spongy with water. At dawn, tired, but hopeful of a safe arrival at Mosul that afternoon, we set out, but a side-current of exceptional force and speed caught us, and cast us upon a rock, against which the stream fought and broke. We took it broadside on. The force overthrew our tent and the samovar of boiling water for tea. Teacups, saucers, and such small fry, leaped out into the stream, a bale rolled off, then a box—of mine—skins popped or floated away detached, rafters smashed, and we sailed away, carried along irresistibly, literally sinking. The crew and passengers were busy trying to save the cargo, that threatened to roll overboard. Rowing was impossible, for an oar was damaged, and we could only sit and wait for the next crash, which we were certain would come, and hope that it might be in shallow water.

We were saved this, for, drawing near the beach, the idea struck our captain to swim ashore with a rope, the distance being some fifty yards. One man's strength, or two, was patently insufficient, so three of us, the crew and myself, stripped and fell overboard with the rope, notwith-

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standing the protest against my action from Haji, who thought it *infra dig.* for an effendi, and even wondered how a person of any comparative importance could be expected to help himself in an emergency. We succeeded in getting a foothold about ten yards from shore, and though dragged along, at last pulled the raft in and tied up.

The whole day we all worked, unloading the raft, repairing and reloading, hindered by the soldiers, who turned up, refused to help, and would have beaten the skipper had we not intervened.

Finally, after accusing us all of stealing a shoe that had fallen overboard, they came to blows among themselves, and, assured that we should be repairing for another three days, left for Mosul, cursing.

Next day we ourselves arrived, weary enough, our raft sinking, and an hour or two after sighting the first garden of Mosul, floated down past the sulphur spring and the old wall of the town to the lower landing-place above the composite stone and boat-bridge, and, calling porters, Haji and I installed ourselves in a caravanserai in the bazaar, having been twelve days *en route* from Diarbekr.

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CHAPTER V

MOSUL, THE CITIES OF THE ASSYRIANS, THE YAZIDIS

I SUPPOSE it must be the proper thing when writing of Mosul, to expatiate upon the antiquity of Nineveh; but so much has already been written upon this subject ever since Layard first uncovered its mounds, and so well written, that to attempt adequately to treat of it here would be presumption. Suffice it to say, that around Mosul, the modern city, which stands opposite the ancient Nineveh, sometime capital of Assyria, are the remains of Nineveh, old and new, while in the neighbourhood are Kalah, Asshur, Hadra, and Khorsabad (Dar Sharrukin), some of which are being excavated by energetic Germans, who publish yearly an excellently illustrated account of their labours.

The traveller to-day is shown by the people of Mosul the mosque and minaret of Nebi Yunis, "The Prophet Jonah," erected in Muhammadan times by Muslims, who had identified the site with that of Nineveh.

Christian, Jew, and Muslim alike pay considerable reverence to the shrine, although the two former are not allowed access to it. All believe in the ingenious story with a blind faith that should shake our modern sceptics. Unfortunately it is practically impossible, in these days of miracles explained, to believe in the fish of Jonah, that either slid across dry land, or, as Mr Fraser[1] remarks, "must have been a clever fish to swim 20,000 miles . . . in three days and nights," unless, as he sagely observes, "the fish . . . according to the Scriptures, had been specially prepared, doped perhaps, as they call it in America."

[1] David Fraser, *The Short Cut to India.*

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The Bible, with that protective ambiguity not always absent from its more wonderful tales, says that Jonah embarked from Tarshish. Now Tarshish, the Phœnician name for Spain, is just exactly the direction in which the unwilling Jonah would have fled in order to escape the tedious desert journey to Nineveh. We are not told how far they got when the tempest broke out, but there seems no reason why one should not assume it to have occurred promptly, and to have driven the ship back upon the Syrian coast, when Jonah might possibly have landed, if we can ignore the fish. Certainly the fish is unfortunately assertive, and its curious feat of carrying Jonah to a point three days from Nineveh is explainable only as hazarded above by Mr Fraser. Also, the Tigris is hardly deep enough even for sharks above Tikrit, many miles towards Bagdad.

At any rate, one explanation is as good as another with so Biblical a history. It would seem reasonable to suppose that Jonah, finding himself once more in Syria after his shipwreck, set forth for Nineveh, a journey which must have taken him anything between twenty and forty days.

But here, if we accept the foregoing theory, we are faced by another remarkable feat of travelling, for "Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days journey," which has been taken to mean that Nineveh was three days away from where the fish vomited up Jonah.

But it is a noteworthy fact that the magnitude of the city is mentioned, so to say, in a breath with the distance from somewhere, and this supports a theory which, in all humility, is here advanced.

Those unfamiliar with Eastern colloquialisms cannot be expected to know that in these lands of camel and mule travel, the unit of travel is "one day," and since miles and furlongs do not exist—the parasang is a Persian, not an Arabian measure—"a day" means about twenty miles. Would it not be intelligible to say—when it is remembered that the name of a city still comprehends the cultivated lands about it—"Nineveh was an exceeding great city of

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sixty miles (in extent)," *i.e.*, with its irrigated lands, around which was, and is, sandy waterless desert.

The following verse[1] then reads intelligibly: "Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey." He began to enter by the cultivated lands, and assuming the city to be about the centre, would reach it the second day. If, as we used to be told, Jonah was yet two days away from Nineveh when he predicted and cried, "Yet forty days . . ." and so on, the obvious conclusion must credit Jonah with an exceeding great voice, or messengers to carry his word before him, or unavoidably figure him as a fatuous fellow literally "crying in the wilderness."

If, however, we assume that for a day he came along through the fields and cultivations, he would arrive at the city the second morning, and his cry would naturally fall direct upon the ears of the townspeople.[2]

A curious feature of the whole business is that no mention of Jonah is made on the Assyrian monuments, which would surely have been made by those conscientious historians, the rulers of Asshur, if he had acquired such importance before the King of Nineveh as we are told in Jonah iii. 6.

Whatever be the solution of the story, the worthy prophet, who displayed a lamentable temper in his proceedings at Nineveh, enjoys the full respect and admiration of the good folk of Mosul, who in 800 A.D., inspired by the

[1] Jonah iii. 3.

[2] Professor Ragozin, in his excellent book on the history of Assyria, mentions a possible explanation of the "Fish," which, if acceptable, disposes entirely of that inconvenient creature.

"The very fable which is such a stumbling-block to the intelligent reading of the whole book becomes most unexpectedly cleared of its hitherto impenetrable obscurity when Assyriology informs us that the Assyrian name of the "great City" is NINUA, a word very much like "nunu," which means fish, the connection being, moreover, indicated by the oldest sign for the rendering of the name in writing, which is a combination of lines or wedges plainly representing a fish in a basin or tank. The big fish that swallowed Jonah was no other than the Fish City itself, where he must surely have been sufficiently encompassed by dangers to warrant his desperate cry for deliverance."

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tale that occurs in the Bible, Turah, and Quran alike, erected the present mosque.

The Mosul people, especially the Christians, are very proud of their city and the antiquity of its surroundings. The Christians, regarding themselves as direct descendants of the great rulers of Assyria, assume an autocratic bearing in their relations with the plebeian Armenian, which I believe no one grudges who knows both races.

Mosul itself, crowded on and around its mound, a filthy and labyrinthine city, inspires the modern visitor with a respect for its apparent antiquity and its no less remarkable smells. I remember noting one most pleasing feature of municipal arrangements, which provides a kind of pool by one of the main streets where the superfluous contents of cesspools is emptied. Antiquity cannot claim Mosul as it does many a lesser city, it is only in Muhammadan times that it has come to importance, and held a place in the economy of Mesopotamia.

A modern Persian historian and geographer, Haji Zainu'l Abidin Shirvani, gives the following note upon Mosul, in his work, the "Bustanu's Siaha" ("The Garden of Travel"), p. 569:—

"The general opinion is that the first person to build it (Mosul) was Zuwayid bin Sawda, and in Persian it was called Ardeshir. After Islam arose, the Hammer Arabs attacked and took it, building therein structures of stone, and a protecting wall, leading water to it, and making gardens."

Its proudest boast, as an Arab city, is that there is no definite record of it having fallen into Persian hands, a fact indisputable apparently; but it must be remembered that, when the Persians possessed these lands, Mosul, if it existed at all, was a place of little importance.

To-day its most uncharitable detractor cannot say that. Despite its filth, the meanness of its bazaars, its unpleasant climate, and the Turks, it is a very important place, and a populous one, counting 90,000 souls, by a late and reliable computation. If the purpose of this book were to talk trade, it were possible to descant upon its

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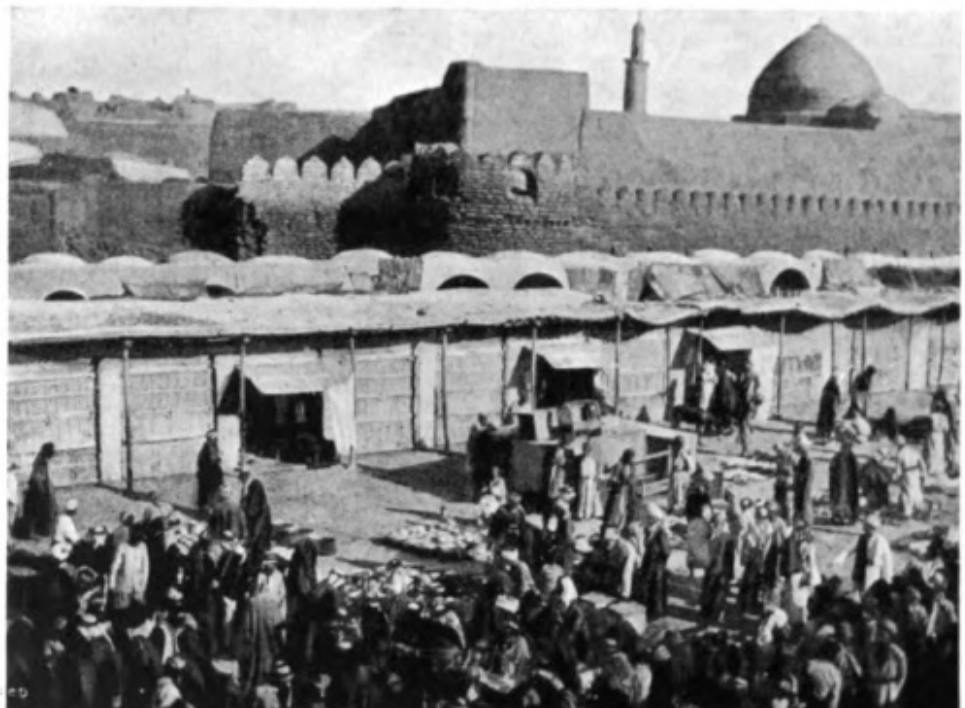

BAB-UL-TOP AND AUCHON MARKET, MOSUL.

[*To face p. 92.*

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leather craft, its cigarette-paper manufacture, its carpenters and masons; and it is but due to the Christians to say, that whatever commercial importance it possesses is due to their efforts, and to their efforts alone.

Here, of all the cities of Syria and Mesopotamia, the Christians enjoy more freedom from persecution than any other population of the same persuasion forced to live side by side with Musulmans. They themselves attribute this desirable state of affairs to the fact that both Muslim and Christian are Arab in language and sympathy, and above all are bound together by the bond of fellow-townsmanship that is often so strong a consolidating feature of isolated towns in the East. At all events the statement is supported by the immunity they have enjoyed from molestation during all the massacres of Christians that have occurred within the last two centuries.

They affirm that on one such occasion the Turks endeavoured to rouse the Musulmans of the surrounding districts to enter the town and slay the Christians, and did their utmost to incite the Muslim townspeople to assist in the massacre, but so far from their proposals being met with consent, they were warned that any attempts of the kind would see Christian and Musulman combined.

Nowadays, when Mosul is a city fairly well kept in order, when street murders are of not more than weekly occurrence, the place is full of the Turk, who seeks a post in a city where the hostile Kurd and nomad Arab cannot offend his dignity by their disrespect, nor menace his person with their ever-ready rifles. The language of the place is Arabic, but Turkish is understood, as is also Kurdish, for Kurdistan is not far away, and the wild characters one meets sometimes in the bazaars tell of the proximity of the tribes.

Bad government and continual insecurity of the country have done their best to restrain the people from any attempt at permanent buildings, the result being that every bazaar, mosque, and caravanserai is broken down and ruinous; in fact, Mosul strikes the stranger as a squalid city on the verge of disintegration. A few moments out-

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side the city one steps into the Mesopotamian desert, and Mosul, standing there, a mound in a desert, looks every bit what it is reputed among the Western peoples, a city buried in a remote and unmerciful wilderness. To approach it from any side except Diarbekr, by river, one must pass several days of the almost waterless desert road. Only to the south-east is the land fertile, and one understands why it is in that direction that Assyria proper lay. To-day the distant Zagros Mountains and their unknown and feared Kurds form a barrier as unconquerable as ever the ancients found them; and to them it was my purpose to go.

We put up in an upper room of a khan or caravanserai called Hamad Qadu, and as our ways lay together, at least as far as Erbil, we thought to continue in companionship. But Haji found a cousin, who dragged him off to his house, and so we settled up our accounts and parted. The old man seemed to have conceived a great affection for me during his journey. "I never had a son," he said, "for never did I take to myself a wife, for women are affliction and tribulation; but now I am old, I realise what it might have been to have had a son, and I curse the stiff-neckedness that ran me counter to the infallible laws of the Omniscient," and he wept awhile, embraced me, and departed.

Left alone in my stone cell, I bethought me of finding a muleteer to take me to Sulaimania, and as the café is the advertisement medium of the East, I betook myself there, inquired for a "qatirchi," as the Turks call a muleteer, and found myself immersed in local politics. The bearing of them upon my need of a mule appeared at the end of the story, and may as well do so here.

There are in Mosul a number of Sulaimanians engaged in trade, besides the inconsequent people who in the East travel from place to place apparently for the love of it. There are also soldiers galore—creatures dead to any feeling of self-restraint, decency of behaviour and manners, who are a curse to the place they pollute. A brawl occurred, owing to an assault by a drunken soldier upon a

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Kurdish woman of Sulaimania, and as Kurdish blood, even the vitiated blood of Sulaimania, is hot, it boiled, and many Mosul people were killed.

The primitive laws of these parts count the blood-feud as their chief, and here was sufficient to keep the two towns at feud for years. No native of Mosul dared go to Sulaimania, and equally, no Sulaimanian dared show himself in Mosul, though he was safer in a city where sufficient order prevailed to prevent his murder, except under provoking circumstances.

Besides this, even were there not these obstacles to free intercourse, a Kurdish tribe called the Hamavand had cut all communications on the Sulaimania road, killing and robbing all who attempted the passage.

That was why I could get neither mule nor muleteer, and had to face the prospect of remaining in Mosul indefinitely. To this I could not resign myself, and cast about for some means of approaching Sulaimania by another road.

Two days I spent in idleness, passing the time in my room and at the café. The question of food was simplified for me by the excellent dates and buffalo cream in the bazaar, upon which, with unleavened bread, I lived, desiring nothing better.

On the third morning three or four Turkoman natives of Kirkuk appeared, and tried to make me hire mules to that place, which is half-way to Sulaimania. Big, rough men, almost like Kurds, speaking Kurdish fluently, they dilated upon the dangers of the other routes, the impossibility of going to Sulaimania from Keui Sanjaq, whence I had entertained hopes of going. They would not give me transport to Sulaimania, but would undertake to find me mules if any went on, a very safe compact for them had I accepted it. But I resolved to wait a little longer, thinking that perhaps they would, finding cargo scanty, consent to take me all the way.

My patience was rewarded, but not as I expected. That afternoon, returning from the café, I was hailed by a sorrowful-looking individual, who turned out to be a native

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of Sulaimania and a muleteer. It seemed that he had been engaged to bring from that place a merchant, who had made himself so obnoxious to the natives as to prefer the risks of Mosul to those of Sulaimania. The muleteer, not in any actual danger, was nevertheless somewhat nervous about staying in Mosul, and as all trade was stopped between the two places, could not hope for loads, all of which considerations put him in such an accommodating frame of mind, that he was ready to start at any time, and accept the sum of four mejidies (about 13s. 4d.) for the six days' journey.

So I paid him his earnest money of a mejidie, and sealed the contract by a cup of tea at the café. The Turkomans were somewhat disconcerted when they heard of the transaction, and predicted all kinds of catastrophes, particularly robbery and murder by the Hamavands, through whose country they swore we could not pass.

However, we started next day in the afternoon. The mules were on the opposite side of the river, so porters had to carry the luggage over the bridge of boats and its stone continuation to the flat beach on the other side, where loads were piled, awaiting mules for Kirkuk and Keui Sanjaq. The mules appeared about four o'clock in the afternoon, and we started. My steed was loaded with two boxes, slung at either side; upon these bedding was laid, and the whole secured by a long girth, and I climbed to the summit of the erection and experienced once more the joys of sitting on a sloping half-yard of bedding through which all the knobs of the pack-saddle asserted themselves. Upon such a seat one has to sit for twelve hours at a stretch very often, and to the inexperienced the question of balance is usually sufficient to occupy attention till the lumps beneath him begin to bruise.

To my surprise, instead of heading south-east, we commenced to go in a northerly direction, but this I found was to reach a good camping-ground for the night. For an hour or so we went through a kind of thicket, and at last, emerging on a little plain where the grass grew high and green, we cast our loads, and the mules were led off to

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water. Our party was a small one, all natives of Sulaimania, except one muleteer, a Kurd of Halabja, a place I was to see later. The muleteer himself, Rashid, had an assistant, an ancient man of vile temper, and he in his turn boasted a menial youth. There were two other travellers, a servant clad in a long green overcoat and pegtop trousers; and a kind of pedlar. These last strongly advised me to discard my fez for a skull-cap and turban, and provided me with the necessary articles for constructing one.

It appeared that in wearing the conspicuous scarlet headgear I was a source of danger both to myself and the others, for the Kurds, who hate anything and everything appertaining to Turks, have a way of singling out this mark of the beast as a target. Even the overcoat I wore was a subject of deprecation, for we were getting to the land where, if one is not a Turk, it is "aib"—a fault—to wear anything but what custom sanctions.

The costume of Sulaimania cannot be termed Kurdish, though the wearers style themselves Kurds, with what accuracy will be seen later.

It is the fashion to use the striped Aleppo cotton cloth called "Shaitan Baizi" (which means the "white demon") for garments, and a Sulaimanian outfit is as follows:—A pair of white cotton trousers, very baggy in the legs, but gradually growing narrower towards the ankles, which they embrace tightly. Socks are not worn, but the feet are shod with red leather shoes, of which the toe turns up in a point. The back is often taken up to a tapering flap of several inches long. The undershirt is equally of white cotton, reaching to the hips, and fastening at the neck with a knob of cotton made into a button. The sleeves however, a kind of exaggerated surplice sleeve, hang down in a point reaching the ground, and serve for wrapping up money and papers, for drying the face of water or sweat, and cleaning the nose after it has been emptied by the application of the fingers and a powerful snort. Over these garments a long tunic of cotton cloth, open at the front and reaching to the heels, is brought together by a

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waistband or belt. The sleeves of this are open from the wrists to near the elbow, permitting them to be easily turned back and rolled up, when the superfluous shirt-sleeve is rolled round and tied about the upper arm.

If it be cold, a sleeveless waistcoat of thick felt is worn, and an abba, or camel-hair cloak, is the property of every person of any importance. The inferior classes make their abbas of a thin cloth, of a grey or yellow colour. The head-dress is several blue and white handkerchiefs wound about a skull-cap of black cotton cloth, ornamented with flowers worked in silks. The style of head-dress marks to a great extent the different tribes of Kurds. A heavy dagger stuck in the girdle completes the costume for the townsman. This is the dress of the Sulaimanian as well of the Hamavand, Jaf, and other extreme southern tribes, who have discarded the old fantastic garments. The real Kurdish costume, which will be described later, is very different.

My dress, however, had to pass somehow, and the muleteer coming up, made the useful remark that if a stranger adopted the customs of a new country, at once he would forfeit the consideration granted him by those he met on the road, which is a very true observation.

By sunset we had the tea ready, the little glasses circulated, and, casting our bread and dates on to a common handkerchief, we dined, and then, wrapping ourselves in our cloaks, lay down in the shadow of ancient Nineveh to sleep, none of my companions aware that where we reposed was just under the palace walls of Sennacherib.

There are, opposite Mosul, the remains of two great cities. The most ancient of all Assyrian palace-cities is Asshur, the city of Tiglath-Pileser, whose name occurs in the Bible so often, that great spoiler of the Israelites, who reigned eleven hundred years before Christ. The ruins of this, now known as Kileh Shergat, are situated on the west bank of the Tigris, some distance below Mosul. Lower down still, where the Greater Zab River joins the Tigris,

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are the ruins of Nimrud, or Kalah,[1] the royal city of Asshurnazipal, who ruled Assyria from 884 to 860 B.C., and whose campaigns extended, like those of many of the Assyrian kings, to the Mediterranean coast.

North-north-east of Mosul is the place called Khorsabad, a Kurdish name meaning "The place of the bear," or a corruption of Khosruabad—"The Abode of Khosroes," but known to the realm of Assyria as Dar Sharrukin, the palace of Sargon, a great ruler, who carried away the Jews "into Assyria, and placed them in Halah, and in Habor the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes," *i.e.*, in what is the western portion of what is known as Assyria proper. The River Habor is now called Khabur, a tributary of the Euphrates, in central northern Mesopotamia.

Of the great cities of the Assyrians there remain Arbela, to be spoken of later, and Nineveh, probably the most famous of all. This is situated partially in the mound upon which the shrine of Jonah now stands, and at Koyunjik, a mile or two farther north, just by where we camped. This latter is the older Nineveh. Here, Sennacherib in 700 B.C. built himself a palace in the already ancient city in the fashion of his ancestors. Part of his life he spent in the wars with the Jews: he had summoned Jerusalem to surrender, had besieged it, had done his best to resubdue Judah and Israel, when he was driven off by a plague, a fact recorded by Isaiah. From Syria to Persia, from Armenia to the Persian Gulf, in the manner of his fathers, he waged war, and subdued again the ever-rebelling lands, finally retiring to his palace at Nineveh, to be foully murdered by his sons.

His fourth and favourite son, Esarhaddon, succeeded him in 681 B.C., and in 670 B.C. commenced the palace of New Nineveh, the mound of Nebi Yunis, the other side of the brook Kauther, which we had crossed in the afternoon, and which in those days existed.

In these mounds, of which four have been partially excavated, furnishing us with a wealth of precise informa-

[1] Kalah was founded by Shalmaneser I., 1300 B.C.

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tion and glorious sculpture, there lies yet many a volume, and as yet Arbela, which is as ancient as any of them, is untouched.

Next morning early we arose and loaded our animals, and took a course almost due south. First, we recrossed the historic brook Kauther, passed under the shadow of Nebi Yunis mound, upon whose sides is a large village, and had before us a great rolling plain, entering which we were upon the ground of ancient Assyria proper. To our left ran a range of low hills, and in their folds were many villages, dull collections of mud-huts half-buried in the ground. But they contain two races whose history is full of interest. No Musulman inhabits this plain; there are but Chaldeans and Yezidis, those "Devil-Worshippers," who have been accused, besides worshipping Mephistopheles, of adopting and practising the rites of Semiramis, the priestess of the lascivious cult of the worship of the sexual organs.

It is due to these Yezidis to clear their character of this last accusation, for which no reason can really be attributed except the hatred of the Muhammadan and Christian commentators, whose object has been solely to discredit them, and not to enlighten general readers.

The Yezidis, while recognising a Supreme Being, shun allusion to him as forcibly as to the devil, the mention of whose name, or any word suggesting the evil principle, occasions them infinite distress. When the name of Satan cannot be avoided, they use the expression Malek Taus (King Peacock),[1] or Maleku'l Kut (The Mighty Angel). They believe Satan to be chief of all the angels temporarily fallen in punishment, but to be restored eventually.[2]

[1] Layard mentions the image of the bird, which local tradition has seized upon as a proof of idolatry, but neither he nor any subsequent traveller could gain a sight of it, nor learn more of its use than that it was sent from place to place (being a small object) accompanying important messages among the high priests.

[2] This is the usually accepted theory. The Tiflis Yezidis, however, gave a later inquirer a different version, stating that Satan has, after weeping sufficient tears in seven vessels to quench the seven hells of his seven thousand years' exile, now been reinstated in Heaven.

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Next to Satan are counted Gabriel, Michael, Raphael, Azrael, Dedrael, Azraphael, and Shemkiel, seven powerful angels who influence the affairs of this world.

They reject none of the holy books of the various religions, but while placing full confidence in the Old Testament, regard the New Testament and the Quran simply as holy books worthy of veneration.

Christ they consider an angel, and deny His crucifixion,[1] and Muhammad, Abraham, and the patriarchs they reckon as prophets. Moreover, they await both a reappearance of Jesus Christ, and the coming of the Imam Mahdi.

The name of the sect is of doubtful origin, but Layard is inclined to a theory that it may be connected with an old Persian word meaning God.[2] The theory advanced, particularly by Shiah Muhammadans, that they were founded by Yazid,[3] the murderer of the saint Husain, is obviously untenable, and was put forward solely in order to further discredit them. The true origin of the sect is quite unknown, and the peculiarly mingled nature of their tenets makes investigation difficult. The Avesta, the sacred book of Zoroastrianism, about the 6th century B.C., mentions and execrates certain devil-worshippers, and Zoroaster himself had a campaign against similar people in north Persia. There are, in the faith of the modern Yezidis, certain indications of a connection with the ancient faith mentioned in the Avesta as being that of prehistoric peoples—a species of nature worship. But then there are equally indications of the survivals of the old Chaldean or Babylonian sun-worship, particularly in the reverence they pay to the sun, called by them Shaikh Shems, and the moon, as Shaikh Sin, corresponding to Shamash and Sin of the ancient mythology.

Can we assume this important event to have happened since 1839, when Layard was informed of the theory quoted in the text?

[1] Here they have adopted the Muhammadan tradition, see Quran, iv., 156: "They slew him not, and they crucified him not, but they only had his likeness."

[2] Yazd, Yazdan.

[3] Or, that Yazid became a leading member of the sect.

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Their customs, like their tenets, display a remarkable catholicity. They baptize, circumcise, reverence the sun and moon, carve Musulman texts upon their tombs, quote the New Testament, allow polygamy, consider wine lawful, and certain meats forbidden, a mixture of the habits of Zoroaster, Assyrio-Babylonian, Muhammadan and Christian worship unequalled by any other sect. They abhor the colour blue, and never use it in their dress nor display it in their houses.

The centre and apparently original seat of these people is near Mosul, and there, in a valley of the Kurdish hills, is buried the Yezidi saint and prophet, Shaikh Adi, who is said to have lived variously in the ninth and eleventh century.

Very little has hitherto been known about Shaikh Adi, the date of his existence is disputed, and his identity has not been even hinted at, except for an ingenious theory put forward many years ago, attempting to connect him with Adde, a discipline of Manes.

So far we have had to be content with the assertion advanced in a Persian work that he was one of the Marwanian dynasty of Khalifas or "Caliphs," an error easily discovered.

I think, however, that the following explanation may be now accepted, the result of investigations in various Muhammadan works, to the authors of which he is well known.

From these the writer has extracted the information that Shaikh Adi was the son of Musafiru' Zahid, of the family of Ummaya, a native of Baalbek in Syria. In the reign of Marwan (early eighth century), he "was transferred" to Mosul,[1] and resided in the towns of the great Kurdish tribe of Hakkari, where his great sanctity gained him a large following among the peoples there residing.

He died during his exile, and was buried in a valley called Lash,[2] which means in Kurdish "the place of

[1] Original reads "wa antaqala bi'l Musil" (Taraiq ul Haqaiq).

[2] I made inquiries when in Mosul and afterwards, regarding this place, which is called Keuwi Lash, or The Mountain of a Body—or

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a body," probably a name given after the interment.

There are four ranks in the priesthood of the Yezidis: Pir, Shaikh, Qawwal, and Faqir. The first, a Kurdish and Persian word signifying an elder or a saint, are persons of great sanctity and abstention. The Shaikhs (leader, chief), correspond to resident priests, while the Qawwal (speaker) are itinerant, and are expected to sing and dance in the festivals which demand those exercises. The last order, the Faqir (poor, humble), perform menial tasks in attendance upon the tomb of Shaikh Adi, at the valley of that name near Mosul.

The language used is a Kurdish dialect, but Arabic is employed in their chants and hymns.

A great deal of mystery surrounds their origin, and, as reading and writing are considered crimes among them, documents do not exist to help speculation. Layard imagined them to be Chaldean by origin, who have adopted the outward forms of many religions as a protective measure, and incidentally fallen into confusion regarding their own tenets.

They have been regarded from earliest times with execration by Musulman and Christian alike, and have lived ever at hostility with all their neighbours. At one time they possessed some numerical strength, and harassed their enemies very seriously, but a Kurdish chief subdued them and broke their power by a wholesale massacre. Since then they live here and there among the Christians and Kurds, a certain number still inhabiting the Sinjar range of hills, which stretches in a westerly direction from Mosul. They also exist in the Caucasus, near Tiflis and Bayazid.

Since Layard's time they have suffered further persecution from Turk, Kurd, and Christian, and at present are in a miserable state of poverty. Except for the fact

corpse. A Muhammadan priest of Mosul informed me that Shaikh Adi is certainly buried here, and reverence is paid to the tomb by some Musulmans, who, however, are inclined to shun the place, owing to its association with the Yezidis.

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that they do not wear blue, they are indistinguishable from the population of Kurd, Turkoman, and Chaldean among whom they live, except by those little marks only a native or a dweller in the land can discern.

South of the range that we passed that second day out of Mosul, and beyond the River Ghazar, they do not exist now. This river we crossed, trending to the east of our morning course, and had great difficulty in passing its ford, the mules several times tottering, rendering the rider's balance doubly insecure. The river is an affluent of the Greater Zab, and flows into it very near the place we passed. In fact, our course, which was towards the Greater Zab River, lay across the point of land, a few miles wide, between the two. We reached the high banks of this historical stream in the afternoon at the same time as the rain, and finding our way half-way down its cliffs by a little path, threw our loads upon a ledge some ten feet wide, and sheltered under a projecting rock.

Across the river we saw the flat plain of the ancient province known as Adiabene to the Parthians and Medes, the most sought-after, the most fertile of all the lands of Assyria, itself Assyria proper. At this time of the year, it was a carpet of rolling green.

Below us, the river, in spring flood, roared around the rocks strewing its broad course, and looking upstream we could see the white peaks of Kurdistan tearing the ragged clouds. Opposite was the village of Zailan, inhabited by a curious sub-tribe of Kurds in Arab dress, of a savage and wild habit and speech. Here, at the same spot that has seen the fording of the armies of the Assyrians, Persians, and Romans, lay the old road from Nineveh to Arbela, which was the sacred city of Assyria, and upon this road the conquering kings of that mighty nation returned to do homage and render thanks and sacrifice to Her of Arbela, the Goddess of Victory. Upon this ancient way we were taking our humble course, and like many of our great predecessors, were stopped at the ferry by the flood. In our times a tiny ferry bark, like those described on the Euphrates, takes passengers across, but it was just loading

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as we arrived, with some donkeys, and the owners had no intention of attempting another crossing in the storm. While they were employed thus I received a call under my rock, from the chief of the place, an individual in a white hairy cloak. He tried me in Turkish and Arabic, and we conversed in the former for a time, during which he told me that, flood or slack, storm or calm, ferry or no ferry, the village had to pay 600 liras a year to the Government of Mosul as the tax upon that part of their revenue. Moreover, did the natives refuse to work at a scheme so often unprofitable, they were chastised by soldiery. Consequently the price exacted for passengers, two and four footed, was excessive, a donkey paying 1s. 8d. and a mule 3s. These considerations did not seem to affect the Kurds, for in the manner of their kind, they worked like fierce demons, steering and rowing their unwieldy craft with shrieks and laughter. Though called Kurds, and displaying some resemblance to the race, I should think there is a strong Arab mixture amongst them.

We collected a heap of sticks, and sat round a blazing fire, shivering. Sunset was accompanied by renewed wind and rain, so no sooner was it dark than we covered ourselves with everything we possessed, and lay down upon the soppy turf to sleep. The mules were tethered on the ledge, and every now and then one of us would awake suddenly to find a huge nostril puffing inquiring breaths into his face, or to save a quilt or coat being stamped into the earth by his odoriferous neighbours.

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CHAPTER VI

THE ZAB RIVERS, ANCIENT ASSYRIA AND ADIABENE, ARBELA, KIRKUK

REFERENCE to a map will show a rhomboidal space of country with natural boundaries upon all sides, of which the Tigris forms the western. From it spring the others, the two Zab rivers, Lesser and Greater, running up at an angle to meet the Zagros range, which, parallel to the Tigris, makes a fourth boundary. Within these limits lies a land, part plain, part hill, well watered, and of a pleasant climate and extreme fertility, and this was Assyria proper, and the later kingdom and province of Adiabene, whose eastern border, the Zagros Mountains, harboured then, as now, hordes of savage hill people, and formed at once a barrier and a menace, even to the kings of Assyria.

The northern river, that upon which we were camped, is the Greater Zab, known to the Romans as the Lycus. Its proximity to the capitals of Assyria (Kalah was at its mouth) kept it in a protected region during Assyrian times, and the first great battle recorded upon its banks is in 128 B.C., when the Assyrians were but a memory. At the spot where we camped, Indates, general of an army of Fravartish, a Parthian monarch, descending from the Median hills (Zagros), met Antiochus, a Syrian king of renown.

Here a fierce battle was fought, ending in the defeat of Indates, and Antiochus erected a monument upon the spot of his victory, to commemorate the defeat of a powerful Parthian.

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The Lesser Zab, a smaller river, a long day's journey across the plain, has acquired more fame in battle and history. Tiglath-Pileser I. in 1100 B.C. mentions on the famous cylinder found at Asshur, "forty-two countries altogether, and their princes from beyond the Lesser Zab, the remote forest districts at the boundaries to the land Khatti,[1] beyond the Euphrates, and into the upper sea of the setting sun,[2] my hand has conquered from the beginning of my reign until the fifth year of my rule."[3]

In A.D. 52, during the time of dispute between Parthians and Romans, Vologases, the Parthian king, undertook an expedition against Izates, the tributary king of Adiabene, "the land between the two rivers," but having encamped upon the Lesser Zab, was called back suddenly southwards by rebellions in the cities there.

However, the battles for which the Lesser Zab must be above all events famous, are the battles between the Khurasan forces of Abu Muslim the Abbaside and those of Abdullah ibn Marwan in A.D. 749, and between the same Khurasanis and Marwan himself, in A.D. 750, five months afterwards, in both of which battles, Marwan, the last of the long line of Ummayid khalifas, was defeated. The importance of these battles ranks as high as any in modern Eastern history, for by the decisive victories gained there, an Arab khalifate of immense power was terminated, and replaced by a Persian dynasty, the House of Abbas, of Khurasan, in Eastern Persia.

"It may truly be said that Qadisiyya and Nihavand were avenged on the banks of the Zab," says a great authority, alluding to the battles one hundred and ten years before, when Zoroastrian Persia was broken before the Arabs of the new faith of Muhammad, whose descendants in their time were to become the subjects of those Persians to whom, in the folly of their own ignorance and savagery, they had applied the name Ajam—'the Barbarians.'"

[1] The Hittites.
[2] The Mediterranean.
[3] Ragozin's *Assyria*, p. 57.

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From our position on the Greater Zab it was a day's journey (ten to twelve hours in the saddle) to Arbela, or Erbil, as the modern style has it,[1] and we crossed the river early, and by sunset were arrived. The situation of the town is in a low hollow at the foot of a small range of hills, behind which rise a higher ridge of the Zagros. Consequently, it would not be visible across the rolling plain, were it not for the huge mound that marks the buried ruins of the city of the goddess Ishtar.

The particular afternoon we approached it was a typical spring day. In the plain we had slight showers, but as we approached the mountains, we began to draw into the region about which the thunder-storms circled. Our first view of Erbil was remarkable. Heavy clouds were driving along by and over the mountains, from which the rain descending in grey curtains shrouded the landscape. Brilliant lightning flashes showed up crags of hills among the clouds, and a rainbow attempted to arch the scene. We were searching among the confusion of showers for a sight of the town, when a heavy cloud and its pendant shower passed, leaving a patch of travelling sunshine behind; and, as a curtain that sweeps by, with the muttering of thunder, this veil swept from before Erbil, and shining red and lurid in the sunshine we saw its mound—mysterious, and indistinct, backed and flanked by tortured black clouds and their downpouring rain. For an instant we saw it thus, and then from overhead occurred a cloudburst. The clouds descending in a funnel-shaped deluge hid the mound, and a din of thunder broke out about it, brilliant lightnings playing the while, making a tumult of the elements fitting in its grandeur to the memory of that great goddess of all, Ishtar of Arbela.

We were just in time to see the little town by daylight. There are no signs of antiquity about it now, except some Muhammadan ruins. All those of Assyria are safely conserved in the mighty mound upon which the modern Turkish ruler has built his castle. The height of the mound is very considerable, rising far above the roofs of

[1] The Kurds call it Haoril and occasionally Haolir.

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the highest houses, a mound so great as to appear natural; one would never credit the fact that it covers the works of man, had we not seen the palaces of the Assyrians elsewhere. Here, where was the great temple that during a thousand years and more received the homage of all races and monarchs, there is every reason to believe that the accumulated embellishment and offering must have made there a shrine unequalled, perhaps, anywhere in Asia.

When we arrived it poured with rain, and in the dark we slopped through the alleys of a modern Eastern town, and over a mound to a ruinous caravanserai, where I found a damp, half-inundated room for my belongings. Since nothing, not even wood, was obtainable, I dined off tea and dry bread and a few dates that night, and slept in a pool. My companions had become separated in the dark, and had found asylum elsewhere. Here is the western border of southern Kurdistan; and Erbil is populated by Baban Kurds, a sedentary tribe, speaking a variation of the Mukri dialect.[1] Turkish is also understood, or rather Turkoman, for Altun Keupri and Kirkuk, Turkoman towns, are not far off.

In the tenth chapter of Genesis, 8-12, we read:—"And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord. And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh in the land of Shinar. Out of that land went forth Asshur, and builded Nineveh, and the city Rehoboth, and Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah: the same is a great city."

Now the date of the building of Asshur's city is at least 1800 B.C., and verses 11-12 allude to the small district of Assyria proper, with its three cities of Kalah, Nineveh, and Arbela. During the whole time of the Assyrian monarchies Arbela took the relation to the reigning king's capital that Canterbury did to London in English history: it was

[1] Formerly one of the most famous and powerful families of southern Kurdistan.

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always the religious capital, gaining an added importance, for that in Assyria the king was always the high priest of the religion of Asshur. That Ishtar, the goddess Baalath of the earlier Chaldeans, transferred her shrine northwards when Assyria began her separate existence, is probable; and Arbela (whose name Arba-Ilu means "Four Gods") was chosen, perhaps as being the shrine of some then existing divinity. So that the Erbil of to-day is at least three thousand years old, and was the second seat of that goddess Ishtar to whom reference was made in Chapter II. The vitality that has kept it in existence since those early days has not deserted it any period, for it has been worthy of mention at least once during the supremacy of every one of the nations that successively ruled it—Assyrian, Mede, Persian, Greek, Parthian, Roman, Armenian, Roman again, Persian, and the Arabs. A few notes arranged chronologically will show this.

Asshurnazipal, 884 B.C., a king who showed the city great favour, calling it "his city," took here a captive king who had rebelled against him, "flayed him alive, and spread out his skin upon the city wall." Sennacherib, a greater king, perhaps the most famous of all kings of Assyria, performed a pilgrimage there in 692 B.C., to pray for success from Ishtar in his coming battle against the Babylonians. He was answered. His son Esarhaddon, but twenty-four years later, being in the northern mountains engaged upon an expedition to avenge the foul murder of his father, is described as having communicated with Ishtar the goddess, and received from her shrine at Arbela messages of encouragement and assurances of victory.[1]

A few years later, in 656 B.C., Asshurnazipal (Sardanapalus), preparing for war against Elam (modern Arabistan in south-western Persia), made a great pilgrimage there, to pray for a sign from the goddess, which was granted. The temple was then one of the most glorious of Assyria. The usurping king, Teumman, was duly defeated, and many captives were brought to Arbela, and, in the brutal manner of the times, flayed alive.

[1] Ragozin's *Assyria*, p. 161.

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At the end of that century—in 608 B.C.—the battle of Nineveh finally overthrew the great empire, and the Medes took possession of it, Arbela falling into their hands. The city's sacredness must have ensured a certain immunity from sack or destruction, for it was important eighty and odd years later, when Darius crucified there a petty king, him of Sagartia.

Till Alexander with his army invaded Asia, it remained in tranquillity, but in 331 B.C. a great battle there made it a Greek town.

However, it was but eighty years after that Arsaces I., the liberator and founder of the great Parthian empire, conquered Adiabene, and subsequently the sanctity of Arbela won for it the distinction of becoming the burial-place of the Arsacid kings of Parthia. The Greek and later Syrian kings of the Alexandrian Succession had, however, sufficient hold over the province to make it necessary for the Parthians to fight them for it; and not till about 136 B.C., did Mithridates, a Parthian monarch, overcome the last of them and possess the country then called Adiabene, ancient Assyria proper. The province became, under Parthian rule, governed by a petty king or "vitaxa."

Armenia in 83 B.C., under Tigran I., the ruling prince, who for some time enjoyed considerable power, possessed itself of Arbela and Adiabene, but was driven out a decade after he entered it, by the Romans and Parthians acting in concert against this insolent upstart. Under the Roman and Roman-Parthian sway the province of Adiabene—always coveted for its richness—attained prominence, for the Romans desired absolutely to possess it and its capital.

So in A.D. 49, Meherdates, a Parthian prince in exile at Rome, being invited by the Parthians to expel the tyrannical Godarz, proceeded from Nineveh to Arbela to meet the usurper, encouraged by the allegiance of Izates, king of Adiabene. He met Godarz near Arbela, and after a long battle, decided chiefly by the desertion of Izates and other fickle friends, he was defeated.

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Thirteen years later, A.D. 62, Tigran V., a king of Armenia appointed by the Emperor Nero, attracted by the richness of Adiabene, and by the absence of the Parthian king Vologases I., attempted its invasion. He harassed the unfortunate people so much, that they sent to Vologases complaining, and threatening to earn peace for themselves by giving allegiance to Rome. The Parthian king responded promptly enough, declared war upon Armenia and the Romans, and appointed Manubaz, king of Adiabene, to command of an army, which expelled Tigran and invaded his country.

From this time Adiabene became a bone of contention till the Persians rose up, and smote Parthian and Roman alike, to found once more an Aryan empire.

In A.D. 115 the Emperor Trajan occupied the province, which resisted bravely; but his successor Hadrian, unable to hold it, relinquished it two years later. Severus, one of the greatest of the later Romans, fired by ambition and a desire to chastise the Adiabenians, who had given him great trouble by helping other states to resist him, invaded the country, but Vologases, in A.D. 196, expelled him. Severus, however, made a final attempt a year or two later, and this time added Adiabene to the Roman Empire, establishing his right to the title Adiabenisus, which he had prematurely assumed in A.D. 193.

Arbela under the Roman rule suffered a scandalous and sacrilegious outrage by one Caracullus, who, returning from an expedition against Babylon in A.D. 216, broke into and violated the Parthian royal burying-place, dragged out the bodies, and cast them away.

It had but ten years longer to exist under the foreign tyrant, for Artaxerxes (Ardashir) the Persian, of the new Sasanian dynasty, conquered it, and expelled both Roman and Parthian from that and many other lands.

Under the favourable rule of this enlightened and civilised monarchy the Christians made great progress, obtaining protection and encouragement from the Persian Zoroastrian monarchs, and Adiabene was in A.D. 500 the see of a Chaldean bishopric, including Mosul and Arbela,

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where the shrine of Ishtar, after having exacted worship for a couple of thousand years, fell into a speedy disrepute.

In the 7th century the hordes of fanatic and savage Arabs swept away the Persian culture that was fast becoming imbued with Christianity, and Arbela and Adiabene fell into those depths that engulfed many a greater city and province. However, Arbela was sufficiently important to be mentioned as one of the larger cities sacked and ruined by the barbarian Mongols of Hulagu Khan in the 13th century. Fortunately the ruins of Ishtar's temple and the old city were then hidden under a covering of earth that time had deposited upon them, and thus Nature has preserved them for Western investigation, from the hands of a human pestilence that respected neither monument of God nor man.

During the centuries the Kurds, who drive out many peoples, have occupied the city, which is still the most important of the province. So powerful is the Kurdish language, however, that in many places whose population is not of that race, the forceful, graphic language has displaced all others; and as in Sulaimania, the people, originally mixed, now call themselves Kurds.

As we entered Erbil at nightfall and left it in the dark of dawn, I had practically no opportunity of seeing its modern aspect, but its mound was visible till we had gone many miles over the flat plain. Starting at four in the morning, we got into Altun Keupri in the late afternoon. To the north of this town the plain gives place to low hills, the valleys of which at this time of the year were a mass of flowers; but the rain once more overtook us as we passed by the pretty gardens outside the little town. Here the Lesser Zab crosses the plain from east to west, marking the boundary of old Assyria proper, and the later Adiabene. Altun Keupri, a place without any particular history, is situated on an island between two branches of the river. From the north it is entered by a long bridge with a turn in the middle, like an elbow. Reaching the entrance to this, one is challenged by an individual who emerges from a hole in a wall, and counting the mules, gives tickets in

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return for payment of tolls, which tickets enable the passenger to pass the bridge on the south side free of further charge. The place is picturesque enough, standing up upon its island, the house-walls being built in a continuation of the low cliff face, giving it a fortified appearance. One long street runs through the town, which among the river Arabs and in Bagdad is known as Guntara (Qantara), "The Bridge." There is a little bazaar, occupying half the length of the town, which gives place to a coffee-house and a tea-house lower down. Then come the barracks, which occasionally harbour a few soldiers; and lastly the telegraph office, which one passes, to reach another large coffee-house and the foot of the bridge that gave the name of "Golden Bridge" to the place.

"Gable Bridge" would have been more correct as a descriptive title. To ride up or down is impossible, the loaded mules and horses have to be carefully pushed and guided over its precipitous slopes.

As an example of the daringly experimental in bridge design it is excellent, and its extraordinary appearance must have impressed its builder very considerably to gain the name "Golden Bridge": it is of the most prosaic and uncompromising stone and plaster.

I found out more about the place later on, but on this occasion we passed right through it, and in a downpour threw down the loads in a yard among a few houses on the south bank of the river. My companions repaired to a little tea-house near by, and I found a room in a corner of the yard occupied by a darvish, who followed the trade of mat-weaver, a craft unknown in these regions. This room he consented to share with me, advising me not to sit too near the door, which had a habit of falling down occasionally. As I was in a town and my Kurdish head-dress was soaking wet and very heavy, I discarded it for my fez, thereby gaining the title of "effendi" from the darvish, where before I had been but "brother" or "beloved." Moreover he busied himself to attend upon me, asking me in Kurdish the while where I was going. At last he

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stopped in the middle of puffing at a smoky fire, looked up at me with a half smile and addressed me in Persian. He had detected a Persian word or two I had used in Kurdish. Hearing my Persian he displayed his knowledge of tongues by asserting that I was undoubtedly a Shirazi, and receiving a confirmation of his statement, immediately changed his "effendi" for "agha," the Persian polite form of address. Nor was he content with this adjustment of affairs; he rose, and taking my hands in his, kissed me on both cheeks, ejaculating:

"Bi haqq i 'Amiru'l Mu'minin chashmam raushan shud va ruzigaram bi ghurbat khush!" ("By the right of the Lord of the Faithful[1] my eyes are lighted, and my days in the strange land made pleasant!")

Never did I realise more vividly the truth of the Kurdish saying, that Persian is the sweetest of tongues; or the Shirazi, "that a word of Persian in a strange land is better than a drink of water in the desert." After weeks of harsh Arabic, uncouth Turkish, and rough, if not disagreeable, Kurdish, Persian came like the voice of a friend among enemies. My darvish was a native of Nishapur, the birthplace of the famous Omar Khayyam, and had travelled on foot from there to Mecca, and though it was now three years, had not yet returned, wandering towards it gradually, earning a living by the exercise of his craft. Now he would not allow me to so much as light a cigarette for myself, and sent me out to the tea-house while he swept the room, prepared tea, cooked some eggs, and got some curds and bread.

So I strolled out, and entered the little place where a dozen people were sitting round on high benches, and had a place made for my fez—not me—by a Kurd, distinguishable by his headgear. I found that my companions had already spoken of me, and I was thus introduced as a Persian of Shiraz, by name Ghulam Husain, which the Turks could never get hold of, calling me Husain Ghulam Effendi, or Husain Effendi. My fellow-travellers must have

[1] The Iman Ali, termed only by the Shi'a or Persian Muhammadans, "Lord of the Faithful."

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advertised my place and circumstance, for tea was brought, and the Kurd beside me, getting up, took away from before a muleteer a little table upon which to put my glass. It is the custom in Turkey in Asia, and Europe too, to greet a newcomer with the "Marhabba," at the same time raising the hand to the eyes.[1] The habit is, besides being an act of politeness, a very true gauge of the relative importance of newly met persons. By the number of "Marhabba" the stranger gets, he can judge the position he shall take among those assembled. On this occasion everyone, including two Turks in uniform, saluted me thus, and I replied to all in the popular fashion, dabbing at my forehead in everyone's direction, only uttering audibly, "Marhabba, Effendim," to the Turks.

My Kurdish neighbour, I found, knew a little Persian, and had been to Teheran and Kashan. He introduced himself as a Kurd of the Mukri, a native of Sauj Bulak, the Mukri capital, and lamented the fate that kept him in Turkish territory mending shoes. Here I began to get in contact with the sentiment I found often expressed by Christian and Kurd alike all over southern Kurdistan and eastern Turkish territory, a leaning towards Persian rule and custom, and an emphatically expressed aversion to all things Turkish. Among the Kurds this sentiment takes so strong a form, that many of them set themselves to make a study of the Persian language, and employ it in all transactions requiring writing, never using Turkish unless forced to do so.

Half the occupants of the coffee-house were Turkomans, natives of Altun Keupri, which is one of the settlements which originated in the times of the Seljuq Sultans —in the Middle Ages. They are a pleasant race, and proud of their descent; nor do they display much sympathy with the Ottoman Turks, whom they regard as plebeian, and their contempt for their mincing and malpronounced Turkish is unbounded. Their own language, which is the

[1] This action is an abbreviation of the compound wave, which apparently beginning by lifting imaginary dust, places it upon the mouth, eyes, and head.

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same as that of Azarbaijan in Persia, they call Turkoman, and it is a rough, forcible tongue pronounced in the guttural manner the Turkish originally displayed.

After consuming a couple of glasses of tea, I rose and returned to my darvish, whom I found seated behind my tin samovar, tea prepared, the room swept. He had procured a number of flaps of bread, a large bowl full of "dugh" or "airan," as the Turks call it, which is curds mixed with water.

In Persian fashion he rose as I entered, his hands crossed before him, nor sat till I was installed upon my strip of carpet and had requested him to do so.

My muleteer now appeared, and Qadir, one of my fellow-travellers, Kurds both. These sat upon the door-step, and by the light of a candle we partook of tea. These two, hearing myself and the darvish speaking Persian, introduced us to the rhyme which is ever being quoted all over Kurdistan—

"Laoza laoza arawia
Turki hunara
Farsi shikara
Kurdi guzi kara ;"

a doggerel signifying,

"Arabic is sonorous, Turkish an achievement, Persian is sugar—and Kurdish an unpleasantness."[1]

The darvish and myself became so engrossed in the reminiscences of Persia in which we indulged, that we quite forgot the presence of the two Kurds. Our conversation outlasted the candle, which guttered out on its end in the mud wall, and by the light of a burning stick the darvish spread our bedding, and we retired, to the sound of a chant which he murmured under his cloak, till he fell asleep, mainly consisting of "Bismillah ar Rahman ar Rahim, al Hamdu'l illah Rebbu'l 'alemin ar Rahman ar Rahim."

[1] Persian translation of the last line :—
"Kurdi guz i khar ast."

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He woke me next morning by murmuring gently, "Agha! Agha!" in my ear. To rouse a sleeper noisily is a breach of etiquette among Persians.

It was just dawn as we crept along the stony road leading out of Altun Keupri to Kirkuk. There are three roads between the two places, and the condition of the country determines which one the caravan takes. This time we were to take the longest; for to our left, the east, lay the Hamavand country, distant certainly, but whence roving bands of Kurds emerged, raiding. By turning to the right, about ten miles outside Altun Keupri, we should pass through a long range of low hills which runs between the two places, and have their protection on our left as we went south to Kirkuk. These are almost the last of the ranges, which, rising higher and higher as the Kurdistan highlands are approached, are the sentinels of the Zagros range, which itself is the rampart of the Persian plateau. All along this road, till we put the hills between ourselves and the east, we could see far-away snowpeaks beyond Rawanduz, that were on Persian soil. We found a way through the range, which is not more that 500 feet high, and came out into a broken place of foothills, where were a few Kurds grazing sheep, and lower down some Arabs cutting green barley that would have yellowed and scorched if left longer. For here is the hot region; Kirkuk is on the same plain as Bagdad, and suffers from an even worse climate, the hot winds scorching it during several months of the year. Clear of these hills, we came out to the flat desert that stretches away west to the Tigris, and beyond to the Euphrates, and beyond again to Syria, a dead level over which the hot wind of summer blows, or where in later spring the air, getting stagnant, grows hot, and one bakes in the shadowless waste. Four hours from Kirkuk, whose gardens were visible as a dark line on the horizon, we passed a ruined caravanserai, which a native of Kirkuk, jogging along on an ass, assured me was the remains of a caravanserai built by Shah Abbas of Persia, some 300 years ago.

Wheat was growing in some places along the road-

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side, but a swarm of small black locusts covered the road with their hopping millions, which were making havoc among the young stalks. Farther on, we were alarmed by the sight of some black tents, the abodes of nomads, and we were not reassured when two horsemen cantered up from behind a fold in the plain. They were Kurds in dress and appearance, but persisted in talking Arabic as they rode along, probably to conceal their dialect. Our suspicions of course at once made them Hamavands, and the one or two of us who possessed rifles slipped a cartridge in. But they either heard or saw a signal in the hills we had crossed, for leaving us suddenly they put their horses to a gallop, and soon disappeared among the hillocks. We were quite close to Kirkuk, where the roads, short and long, converged, and as we came to the junction, an Arab, who had come from Altun Keupri by the short route, told us that our horsemen were two of a gang which had looted a caravan that morning in the hills. It appeared that this band, an outlying one of the Hamavands, patrolled the long road one day, and the short one the next. Our luck had sent us along while they were engaged elsewhere.

Kirkuk, which lies at the end of this range, is invisible till nearly approached, for, forced by the necessity of getting near the water-supply, it has taken a position by the river-bed (which is dry half the year), and is quite hidden by the hillocks around, except from the east side, where the ground slopes gradually down to it. It possesses a mound, upon which part of the town is built, the remainder being round the south of its base.

We entered an outlying village, passed between gardens to a huge barrack where the garrison is quartered, then by a line of coffee-houses full of idle, uniformed creatures, over a long stone bridge, and turning to the right, plunged into the gloom of a short arched bazaar of extraordinary height and width, and out again along a busy street to a clean, new caravanserai.

This, like so many of the caravanserais in the towns of Mesopotamia, is of a composite nature. Its yard and the stables surrounding afford accommodation for beast, while

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the rooms which enclose it on three sides, upstairs, harbour both travellers, and residents, who are strangers without women-folk. The entrance to this caravanserai was between two huge cafés, at the back of which the yard lay, and above this long entrance were the offices of the mayor, and the agent of Singer's sewing-machines, an article which has penetrated to the remotest districts of Kurdistan. These offices opened upon a gallery which communicated direct with the rooms set apart for passengers.

Kirkuk is famous for Turkomans, fruit, and crude oil, all of which abound. The town, which must have a population of at least 15,000, is one of the trilingual towns of the Kurdistan borders. Turkish, Arabic, and Kurdish are spoken by everyone, the first and last being used indifferently in the bazaars. Itself a Turkoman town, to its south and west are nomad Arabs, and to its east the country of the Hamavand Kurds. Turkish power is very evident here. Being near to Bagdad—seven days—and possessing a Turkish-speaking population, it is in a position to supply a large number of youths to the military schools, which, half-educating the lads, turn them out idle and vicious, and incapable of existing without a uniform. The result is that they all obtain some post, telegraph, police, or customs, or join the ranks of the superfluous and unattached army "officers," and return to their native town to lounge in the innumerable tea-houses, and earn a living by tyrannising over whatever unfortunate their position enables them to blackmail and persecute. Consequently, Kirkuk is full of uniforms containing the scum of the town, often drunken brutes—who sap the life of the place, driven to any length of rascality to gain a living, for they are usually unpaid. Despite this plethora of police, I was unmolested, probably the composite crowd of the Kirkuk bazaar makes a stranger too inconspicuous for their attention.

The architecture of the place is purely Arab; the Persian influence noticeable in Bagdad, Mosul, Diarbekr, and other cities of Mesopotamia and Syria is not seen here. Solid stone buildings of no beauty, a few mean mosques and

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minarets, very solid, but with no ornamentation, and an immense arched bazaar, make the architectural features of the place. The Turkoman population, or rather the commercial section of it, compares very favourably with the people of Bagdad and Mosul. A stranger meets with great consideration, nor is he swindled right and left, nor annoyed, as among the Arabs of the greater cities. Purchasing food and other things in the bazaars, I found everywhere an astonishing honesty and rough goodwill that wins the heart of a stranger, and this, notwithstanding the fact that I was taken for a Persian, and a Shi'a Muhammadan, with whom the Sunni has very little sympathy.

I can quote an example which shows how this hospitable quality often appeared.

Some days after I arrived there I found the soles of my boots flapping under me as I walked, so repaired to a shop in the bazaar where Bagdad shoes were for sale. Selecting a pair, I proceeded to bargain, but not knowing the proper price, I was somewhat at a loss to determine my highest figure. The shopkeeper asked two mejidies or forty piastres, so I proposed eighteen piastres, and brought him down by degrees to twenty-two, when having nearly halved the original price, I thought it sufficient, and assented. I produced a mejidie in payment, and was groping in my pocket for the two piastres remaining, when the shopkeeper extended his hand, saying:

"A mejidie is the real price; you are a stranger, and did not our prophet command us all to honour the stranger? Take the shoes, for from you I will not take more than a mejidie, for a Kirkukli the price is twenty-five piastres, but big profits among ourselves do not matter, whereas from you—who I hope will go from Kirkuk with pleasant remembrances—I am content with what a mejidie gives."

This sentiment I encountered everywhere in Kirkuk, except from the Christians; but that is but natural, seeing that I was in the guise of a Muhammadan. I experienced later the kindness of the Chaldeans for strange Christians in the town.

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Besides the Turkomans and other Muhammadans there is a large number of Chaldeans and of Syrian Christians, natives of Bagdad. A few Armenians are also there, employed in Government and commercial affairs, but they are natives of Diarbekr or Armenia. The Chaldean settlement is of considerable antiquity, having migrated here, according to their own traditions, during the time of Alp Arslan, in the 11th century. If Kirkuk is, as the natives assert, a remnant of the Seljuq kings, this is possible, and perhaps even probable. Unlike the Chaldeans of Mosul, they have not forgotten the Syriac character, and while they speak only Turkish, employ these characters in writing among themselves. It is only the Chaldeans who are found living among the Kurds, who have retained their language, both written and spoken. In Mosul, where it is reckoned part of a good education to know it, it has no generality of use, and one has to go to the villages to hear it spoken.

There is a church in Kirkuk administered by priests from Mosul; the Chaldeans are, like nearly all in Turkish territory, Roman Catholics, for the old Chaldean Church died under the unscrupulous assaults of the Roman Catholics, who pursued a Machiavellian policy in bringing over the old Church to Papal allegiance, a change which has been for nothing but the worse.[1]

In Kirkuk they enjoy great freedom from persecution, despite the periodical efforts of Muslim priests to incite ill-feeling against them. Their presence is too necessary to the well-being of the town to make a massacre anything but a catastrophe for the Muhammadan traders, who have been led by their integrity and capability to place great

[1] Lest this statement seem unwarrantable, I beg to support it by the opinion of the Chaldeans themselves. They are in most cases fully aware of the circumstances under which their forbears—and contemporaries—became absorbed into the Roman Catholic Church, and there are very few of them whom I ever heard express any sentiment upon the matter save deep regret, the more so that they know now that it was possible to have the much-prized education the Roman Catholics supply without a disintegration of their Church, for the Archbishop of Canterbury's mission has taught them that.

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faith and confidence, and often to deposit large sums of money with them. In these qualities of honesty, and an ability for getting on with Muslims amicably without conceding a particle of their behaviour as strict Christians, they contrast very forcibly with the Armenians, Syrians, and Arab Christians.

They are distinguishable by their head-dress and shirt-sleeves alone, for they wear the long, striped tunic reaching to the heels, and the zouave jacket or "salta," which, however, they do not ornament with scroll-work in gold and silver as do the Kurds.

Their shirt-sleeves are tight round the wrist, and do not appear below the long sleeves of their jackets; while their head-dress, a blue handkerchief round a skull-cap, is worn broad and flat, embracing the head closely, not standing out as do the turbans of the Muhammadans.

Up to recent years they still displayed a partiality for light yellow striped garments, a relic doubtless of the choice of colour forced upon them in the early Middle Ages by the Khalifas of Bagdad, who commanded all unbelievers to wear a distinctive dress, usually honey coloured.

In Kirkuk is a large colony of Jews, the first of the hosts of that race that exist from here eastward all through Kurdistan to Sina of Persian Kurdistan and Hamadan.

It is thought possible that these are direct descendants of the Jews of the third captivity,[1] whom Nebuchadnezzar carried away to Babylonia in the 6th century B.C., just after the fall of the Assyrian Empire.

They use the Aramaic character, and in Kurdistan speak Hebrew, a remarkable fact being that the Chaldeans of Sina in Kurdistan and the Jews of the same place, while survivals of different epochs, speak almost exactly the same ancient Semitic dialect, a conclusive proof, were any needed, of the Semitic origin of the Chaldeans.

[1] "In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God, and he carried them into the land of Shinar."—Daniel i. 1-2.

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In Kirkuk, as in all Kurdistan, the chief occupation of the inhabitants is that of drapers and mercers, the cotton cloth and print trade is entirely in their hands; in fact so far have their co-religionists of Bagdad progressed, that the cottons of Kurdistan are supplied from Manchester by Bagdad Jews settled there.

Kirkuk is thus a collection of all the races of eastern Turkey—Jew, Arab, Syrian, Armenian, Chaldean, Turk, Turkoman, and Kurd—and consequently enjoys considerable freedom from fanaticism, besides being strongly governed by a Turkish governor who possesses sufficient military strength to keep in order almost every element, the Kurds being the only difficult section of the population, with their contempt for all rule and order that does not emanate from their own khans. Unfortunately this excellent state of affairs does not extend for more than a mile or two outside the town, where Arab and Kurd roam at will, defying all.

In the bazaars one occasionally sees a knot of swarthy fellows, very ragged, speaking a dialect only the traveller in south-western Persia can recognise. These are the Faili Lurs, Persian subjects, whose presence warrants the institution of a Persian Consul here. This individual forced himself upon my acquaintance in the following manner:—

The frequenters of the tea-house by the caravanserai, during the first few days of my stay, came to know me as a Persian of Shiraz, and as Persians are rare in Kirkuk, the consul heard quickly of my existence. I was waited upon one day by a Kurd wearing a Lion and Sun badge, but with no other sign of his office as a consular servant. He demanded my Persian passport, and could not be convinced that I was a British subject, and consequently not amenable to Persian passport laws. Nothing I could say could convince him, the very fact of my speaking Persian fluently damned my assertions; but I was inflexible, and he eventually went away.

Two days afterwards he turned up again; but this time I was prepared to prove to him my identity as a Persian-

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born British subject. To this end I had arranged my Foreign Office passport, which bore the visés of both Turkish and Persian consuls in London. These contained a certain amount of writing in the two languages, and under each of these I wrote in Indian ink, which could be erased by licking it off later, the words "Mirza Ghulam Husain Shirazi," under the Persian visé in the Persian "shikasta" hand, and under the Turkish in the handwriting adopted by Turks. This I now produced with a flourish, displaying with triumph to the messenger and a few of the by-standers with whom I was acquainted the English arms and the signature of Sir Edward Grey—and then turning to the back, the Persian and Turkish visés with my name under each. Perfect success met the scheme, the servant changed his tone and became polite, and the effect upon my audience was to win me many "marhabba" afterwards in the café.

Next morning I was engaged in a little tailoring. My overcoat was getting too warm, or rather, the weather was getting too warm for the coat, and I had no other garment sufficiently long to be dignified, save a thin corded dressing-gown. Perforce I adapted this. I took off the abundant braiding, removed the waist-cord and sewed on some buttons, and produced a garment thereafter called a "labbada" or long coat, such as religious students and Azarbaijan merchants wear.

I was sewing on the last button, when a knock came at the door, and the servant of the Persian Consul stood there bowing, "Would I come and see the Persian Consul on a friendly visit? He was in the caravanserai and very anxious to make my acquaintance." So donning my new garment, I followed him along the gallery.

I found him in a room over the gateway, seated at the upper end upon a small carpet. Below him, that is, against the long side wall and nearer the door, was a collection of varied Kurds, of Sauj Bulaq, Sina, Merivan, and other Persian towns. Their head-dress of handkerchiefs indicated their origin. Standing up near the consul was an elderly, thick-set man, bushy-bearded,

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wearing the baggy trousers and shirt tucked in, that are typical of the muleteers of the Persian border, but his pointed cap proclaimed him a Mukri. The room was partly taken up with three tables, upon which stood basins and copper vessels containing various concoctions. A tray covered with small sweetmeats, just cooked, stood by an earthen oven in a corner; and a young man was engaged in placing therein a fresh tray full of uncooked confections. Sugar loaves lined the walls, hanging by nails, and a smaller table near the window was covered with bottles of colouring matter and the apparatus of a sweet-maker's trade. Amid all this the consul sat, a grey, fierce-looking man, in Kurdish dress, but he wore upon his head the felt hat and narrow handkerchief of the Kermanshah Kurd.

To this assembly I entered, walking delicately to avoid numerous obstacles on the floor, and all rose, answering my "Salamum 'alaikum" with a sonorous "alaikum as salam," to which the bearded man added the "wa rahmatullah wa barikatah."

The consul made place for me by his side, and in excellent Persian replied to my compliments. The assorted Kurds, who understood very little, began a discussion about some tribal feud somewhere, and left us to a conversation in which the bearded man, who turned out to be the proprietor of the sweet business, and a Persian subject of Sauj Bulaq, joined. This old fellow, Haji Rasul, was a darvish of a sect of the Shi'a Muhammadans.

Our conversation turned inevitably upon politics, and thinking my companions must be Nationalists, as are most Persians nowadays, I began to describe some of the doings of the Majlis in Teheran during 1906 and 1907. They listened in silence for some time, offering no opinion, but when I ceased, the consul began with great enthusiasm a flowing eulogium of Muhammad Ali Shah, cursing in the most powerful language the revolutionary movement that tended to put power in the hands of mean schemers, plebeians, and heretics. His arguments hung upon the nail of fanaticism, as I am afraid most of the Royalist

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arguments ever did in those days, and warming to his subject he read me a homily upon the evil of allowing my young mind to be led away by the specious arguments of them who called upon the saints to witness the right of their evil actions. Apt quotations from the Quran he poured out upon me, growing ever more excited, and at length ceased suddenly, out of breath, and hot. I managed to steer him away from this subject, and he began to relate his difficulties and the qualms of conscience he had had in the matter of his late wife, whom, suffering from some terrible internal disease, he had taken to Mosul to the English doctor there.

"This matter," he said, "is a constant source of anxiety to me, for I have not the satisfaction of knowing that God sanctioned the means by the end attained, for she died. I took her from Sulaimania to Mosul in a palanquin, and laid her before the European's door, together with presents of gold and silver, and a bottle of brandy I had bought specially, knowing such things acceptable to the Christians. And he was moved to pity, for he was a generous man, though an infidel, and, refusing the presents, took her in. And many days he spent, labouring with all his knowledge to cure her. Despite the shame of this discovery of her nakedness, and the ridicule it might pour upon me, I persisted, but He who knows took her life. And I yet think that her death was perhaps an expression of the Almighty displeasure, for though but a woman she was a Muslim, and the wife of a Muslim, and the procedure was not in propriety."

He seemed relieved when I was able to quote him the case of a High Priest's wife in Shiraz who had been cured by a European doctor.

After this the meeting broke up, and he departed, and I after him. I subsequently learned that with the appointment of consul he combined the craft of watchmaking, and was known as Mirza Saatchi—"Mr Watchmaker." The old man, the proprietor of the sweetstuff shop, had something to say before I left, and he addressed me in his feeble Persian mixed with Kurdish:

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"I am an old man," he said, "and by many cities have I wandered, from Salonica to Basrah, and Trebizonde to Mecca, but never have I missed the opportunity of cultivating the acquaintance of a Persian or Shi'a. Let us not forget one another. We are both strangers, both of that land that is the fairest of all the earth, where mercy and charity overspread the land, where Muslim treats Muslim as a brother and not a foe—like these Turks. Let it not, therefore, be said that I, Haji Rasul, though I am but a poor Kurd, have violated the tradition of Islam, Persia, and the Kurds alike. Here I work by day, and in the verandah I sit at night, alone; help to relieve my loneliness by your constant company while you are here."

The old man was so evidently sincere, and expressed himself so fervently, that I felt forced to promise to come and see him that evening.

There was a long bench in the verandah from which we could look down at the crowd below and the operations of the police, whose headquarters was just opposite. Here, too, every morning an auction was held, amid a crowd that sat upon high benches under a tree, drinking tea or coffee, discussing local politics, and hatching plots against their neighbours.

The crowd that frequented these coffee-houses—there were four of them round the caravanserai door—were the idlest collection of creatures it is possible to imagine.

Being near the mayoral office, police court, and one or two other public offices, the attendance of uniformed parasites was enormous, and these, appearing about the twelfth hour (then about 7 A.M.), sat till the second hour, then lounged away to their houses in the town, appearing again at an hour to sunset, and sitting there chattering and rattling the everlasting tasbih, the Muhammadan rosary, till late at night.

The newcomer in Kirkuk, who would buy bread, experiences difficulty unless he can find the special bread-sellers, who hawk this necessary comestible about in shallow baskets. Desiring dates, I purchased some the first

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day I arrived, at a shop, and noticing next door a basket of bread, attempted to buy two flaps, but the owners would not sell it. Nor would they consider the question unless I bought something at their shop. This I refused to do, and launched out in some indignation into a tirade against such a habit, which annoyed and harassed the stranger, leaving him hungry in a strange land. This induced them to attempt to make a gift to me of two pieces, which pleased me less, and at last they consented, very unwillingly, to sell me what I wanted. The sale of bread alone, by shopkeepers, is rare all over Sunni Mesopotamian country, and among the Turkomans, and they will—as in this case—give it rather than sell it. This is probably owing to the habit in these patriarchial lands, of making bread in the house which is given freely to all who request it; the sale of such a necessary is looked upon as rather degrading.

One evening at sunset I joined Haji Rasul where he sat meditating on his bench. He had a companion and assistant who performed the labour connected with their daily life, cooking, cleaning their room, spreading the bed-clothes and the carpet upon which we sat. This youth was a native of Smyrna, a simple Turkish lad, the best specimen of his race I ever met. He was a rarity in Muhammadan lands, a Sunni converted to Shiism, for the old Haji had converted him in Smyrna. Despite his travels he could talk nothing but Turkish.

A constant companion of this strange pair was a small white cat, to which they were both strongly attached. Having been with them since kittenhood, it fully reciprocated their affection, and had developed a high degree of feline intelligence.

The old Haji had brought it from Aleppo, and it possessed a little cage in which it performed its journeys. Its food was specially cooked for it by the youthful Turk, and it had regular time and its own dish, for meals.

Spotlessly clean it was, and very exclusive, desiring no intercourse with the roof-prowling cats of the caravanserai, whom it ejected from its neighbourhood.

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Both Persians and Kurds have a strong liking for domestic cats, and in the bigger towns of Persia it is a sorry household that does not possess one or two, as petted as any in Europe.

It was a strange sight to see the rough Kurds who sometimes came to see Haji Rasul, gravely rolling cartridges for it to pursue, or stroking its arching little back with a lighter hand than they ever laid upon anything else, the while talking seriously to it in their rough tongue.

Haji Rasul himself talked Arabic, Turkish, Kurdish, and a little Persian. He had acquired these during his twenty years' wandering. From Sauj Bulaq he had started twenty years before, and had walked *via* Kurdistan and Anatolia to Constantinople. There he had learned the art of making sweets. Saving a little cash, he embarked for Jedda, whence he performed the great pilgrimage. From Medina he walked to Damascus, and finding employment, rested there. Later he went by ship to Salonica, and thence to Smyrna, where he remained some years collecting money to make the long journey to Kazimain and Kerbela, near to Bagdad, the most holy shrine of the Shi'a Muhammadans. It had taken him two years working by slow stages to get from Smyrna to Kirkuk, and he was attempting to collect enough cash here to get him to Bagdad. At any rate he could not have gone when I saw him, for the Hamavand had closed the road to Bagdad by their raids.

Fanatical he was to a degree I seldom have seen. He observed the letter of the law regarding Christians, and was most careful to have nothing to do with them, yet I found him a just, charitable man, very kind hearted, and willing to take the greatest pains to help or make me comfortable. If a Christian said Ṣalam to him, he would not reply by the same salutation, displaying thereby the haughty fanaticism of the most bigoted Shi'a; yet, as every sincere Musulman must, he deplored the decadence of Islam and cursed more violently the backsliders of his own religion than the reprobates among Christians, "for," said he, "these have the law and the book, and the light of the

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saints before them; while those have ever been in a mistaken path, and know no better."

In all his dealings he was just, nor would he favour the Musulman more than the Christian in a matter of business.

He had a habit of dropping into deep meditation. One night he asked me my name; hearing Ghulam Husain, he repeated several times:

"Ghulam Husain, Ghulam Husain," he murmured, "The Slave of Husain, may I be his sacrifice! Ah! Husain, Husain, shall we not rise up and smite the Sunnis, for that they slew him, him the pure, the sinless, betrayed, and murdered by the evildoer—ah, what a name, The Slave of Husain, and what a life to live up to, Husain! Husain! . . ." and he would drop into a reverie murmuring now and then "Husain"—reviewing doubtless the details of the tragedy of that holy man, whose character bears comparison with that of any Christian saint, and whose self-sacrifice and resignation was no less heroic.

A Kurd himself, he deplored the levity of the Kurds, who are much given to dancing and singing. Each night the Kurdish muleteers would collect on the roof of some rooms in the courtyard, and chant their interminable "Guranis" or folk songs, dancing hornpipes of ever-increasing fury and joining in roaring choruses. Sometimes they would engage in wrestling matches, and cast one another about the yard, the exercise often terminating in a display of hot temper, when knives would be drawn, to be sheathed as an onlooker made a jest that called forth laughter from all.

We were hopelessly detained in Kirkuk. Behind, on the road we had come, the Hamavands had closed in; towards Bagdad it was the same, and to the east where our course lay was their own particular country, across which not even companies of soldiers would dare to go.

Every day it was announced that a certain army accountant, whose presence was needed in Sulaimania, would attempt the passage with a hundred soldiers, armed with Mauser rifles, and a number of mules were engaged;

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but the good man never seemed to make up his mind to go. Rashid, my muleteer, had engaged all his spare mules to the Government for this purpose, and a daring Chaldean merchant prepared fifty loads of sugar for isolated Sulaimania. Sixteen days we waited, and at last the order came to load at midnight, and collect just outside Kirkuk—that is, to join the main caravan and the guard. The leader was one Shefiq Effendi, a Kurd of the Shuan or "Shepherds," a large tribe inhabiting the hill country south of the Lower Zab River. By his influence and that of the hundred soldiers, we hoped to pass safely these terrible Hamavands.

By law they were outlawed, and orders existed that any entering the town were to be shot on sight; but such was their reputation for daring, that I often saw them strolling in the bazaar of Kirkuk, caring nothing for a knot of Turkish soldiers, who followed them round, afraid to molest them, for the people of Kirkuk, armed though they were, and protected by a regiment of soldiers, feared a sudden raid of revenge from this intrepid handful of Kurds.

Hearing that I was resolved to go, Haji Rasul did his utmost to persuade me to stay. For they were Kurds, he said—Kurds, more savage than the Jaf, or the Guran, more daring even than the Mukri themselves. He took me by the hands, beseeching me to stay, nor risk the life God had given me for a mere mundane consideration of time.

"Time," said he, "is long, and your life is young; what matter if you stay another month, two months, nay a year, if you are enabled to preserve the body God has entrusted to your care. Have I not been twenty years wandering, and do I complain that I have not yet got back to my native place?"

We were seated round a mess of a kind of porridge at the time, in which we dipped our bread, eating it with our fingers.

"See," he said, "I eat this morsel not because I delight in its flavour, for it is of the poorest, nor because I crave a plenishment of belly, but I am performing that duty which

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is incumbent upon all of us, even pagans, the conservation of the flesh, which God has given into the keeping of our intellects."

Though the restless spirit of the Western had been long calmed within me, yet it was not quelled, and here asserted itself. For sixteen days I had remained in Kirkuk. The weather, with that suddenness of progress to hot and cold that it exhibits upon these dry plains, had grown oppressive; the plain which, when we arrived, was covered with green, if scanty grass, was now a bright yellow, the dried stalks were scorching, and the mules' daily expedition to the plain to graze was almost a farce. In that peculiar way that marks the approach of summer, the sun shot up at a high velocity from behind the crimson hills towards Kurdistan, climbed to his ever-mounting zenith, hung there, it would seem for twelve hours or so, and as quickly descended; the hours of cool daylight were but three. Towards sunset the decrease in temperature was hardly appreciable, for the world was heating, and it took an hour or two of darkness to make it reasonably cool. As has been said before, the town is situated in a position that in our climate we should call "sheltered," which in these lands means extra hot and stifling. The afternoon hours were approaching that temperature which induces sleep behind closed doors, and the one occasion upon which business called me outside, at about three in the afternoon, showed me an empty town, and also scorching heat of the sun in Kirkuk in May.

Besides, the fez, the most utterly ridiculous headgear man ever invented, protecting neither from heat nor cold, acts with such calorific power as to make one's scalp regularly boil in sweat under a hot sun.

Flies, too, were breeding like microbes. My daily journey to the bazaar took me past some butchers' shops, and I noticed one morning that the never-cleansed beams upon which the meat hangs were unrelieved black in colour—flies, solid, and overlaid with flies, that hardly even moved when the butcher swept his long knife along, squashing hundreds, to cut meat next moment without

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even wiping his blade. Fortunately the custom of the country doubtless prevents a great deal of disease that might result from such condition. Butchers' shops open in the early morning till about the second hour; one sheep only at a time is killed, and until that is sold another does not appear. Consequently owing to the short time during which it is possible to purchase meat, there is a great rush of buyers, and the flesh of the sheep and goats does not remain long enough than to have one thin layer consumed by flies.

Water was becoming scarce too; the river, which had run fairly full as we entered the town, was now the merest trickle, and all the water was obtained from wells. To waste such a valuable would have called upon the stranger the wrath of all in the caravanserai, so a scanty rinsing of hands and face was all that could be attempted, and that only when I could by stealth draw a potful and convey it unseen to my room. There are public baths in Kirkuk certainly, but even the natives, bound by tradition and custom to extol all indigenous institutions, admitted that they were not very nice. Nevertheless it surprised them that I did not patronise the "hammam"; but what upset my neighbours was the fact of my shaving myself, which I had attempted to do in private, knowing the prejudice against it. For the East reckons a barber as a very mean fellow, and to perform upon oneself, if it be the beard, a transgression of the Quranic law, and if it be the head, a dangerous folly. And whether it be the result of this repugnance to the trade or a naturally despicable nature that consents to the odium, it is a fact that Oriental barbers are as a class very mean fellows indeed.

Through the offices of my friend the consular watch-maker, I was taken one day to see a notable of Kirkuk, one Reza, called by the Muslims Shaikh Reza, and by the Christians, who hate him, Mulla Reza, an inferior title.

This worthy is the principal priest of the place, and though a Sunni, and a fanatic at that, has no objection to seeing and being polite to the dissenters of Islam, the

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Shi'a, among whose ranks both myself and the watchmaker were classed.

He inhabited a house adjoining the mosque wherein he officiated, one of the best houses in Kirkuk. His court-yard was laid out in flat beds in the Persian fashion, and a few mulberry trees veiled the bareness of the high walls. He received us in a long room, well carpeted, and was alone. A very reverend seigneur this indeed; the frown of sanctity sat blackly upon his brow, unlightened by his white turban. At his elbow on the floor was a gramophone, from whose trumpet a raucous Arab voice had just ceased to shriek verses of the Quran—to such uses are European abominations adaptable! Hearing that I was from Shiraz, he at once began to quote Hafiz and Sa'di, for he spoke excellent Persian; and then, producing a manuscript book, read some of his own poetry. He versified in four languages—Turkish, Arabic, Persian, and Kurdish; but preferred Persian to all of them, having a just contempt for the majority of Turkish verse, consisting as it does nearly all of Arabic and Persian.

He complained bitterly of the progress Christians were making, and doubtless would make under the *régime* of constitutional government; in speaking, his eyes flashed, he grew excited, the latent fanaticism in him boiled, and he longed to see the blood of these infidels spilt. With cries of disgust against the lukewarm sentiments of the Turkomans, he denounced Musulman and Christian alike, and frankly declared that he would like to see the heads of the latter adorning the barrack walls. This creature, who had naught but notoriety to gain from such a catastrophe, has several times attempted to harass the Christians, but they have found sufficient protection, and he sees himself foiled, and his proposals ignored every time he would rouse feeling against these harmless people. It took him the whole time of drinking three cups of tea to exhaust his fury, and we took leave of him, expressing no opinion upon his sentiments.

The watchmaker gave me an example of his hot temper, as we sat in the coffee-house afterwards. At his house he

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was visited one day by the sub-governor, a Constantinople Turk, and the talk turning upon poetry, the shaikh, who has Kurdish blood in him, was extolling the merits of Persian and even Kurdish verse, and expressing his scorn of Turkish. The Ottoman officer naturally objected, and rashly quoted a long poem terminating with the words:—

"Furukhta am bi sham' u kafur u san sin."

"Ah!" exclaimed the shaikh, seizing a perfect opportunity, "Furukhta am" is pure Persian, and "sham' u kafur" are Arabic, and what Turkish remains, but a miserable insignificance? "u san sin," the point coming in with the meaning of the Turkish—"and thou art it"—the miserable insignificance.[1]

About the tenth day of our stay there, the muleteer Rashid came along in great glee, saying that we should leave next morning, and that I had better lay in a stock of provisions for the journey, though, as he remarked, "God knows whether we shall eat our bread, or the Hamavand's."

Four regimental doctors had turned up from Mosul, appointed to Sulaimania, and they were to have as escort a "tabur," or four hundred soldiers. The usual fiasco occurred to prevent our going, for the army, not having been paid for months, went on strike, and two hundred more appointed to replace them flatly refused to go, fearing to face the Hamavand, who had so barbarous a habit of thirsting for the guns and blood of the Turkish troops, and such a capacity for quenching the thirst. So we stayed.

As an instance of the self-imposed duties of the unattached Turkish officer, I may quote the following episode:—

Haji Rasul and myself were sitting in the dark one evening smoking our cigarettes, and conversing upon the usual topic of Persian politics, when a highly uniformed

[1] A little editing was unavoidable here, the shaikh's words being, "Wa bir parcha pukh qaldi, va san sin."

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individual rolled up, and between hiccups gave vent to a hoarse "Salamun 'alaikum." Without invitation he sat between us, and introducing himself to me as a major in some regiment, proceeded to bully Haji. It appeared that the old man had had some high words with one of the people, whom he employed to sell his sweets, and this officious busybody, overhearing, inserted himself between the two, constituting himself an arbitrator. Haji had naturally refused to have anything to do with such matters, but his opponent, seeing a chance of winning his case, commenced pouring out his woes to the officer. The old man in disgust had departed, leaving the pair, and laid his case before the mayor of the town.

The major, meanwhile, had settled the affair with the other litigant, arranging to receive two mejidies as a fee, and finding that Haji did not accept his mediation, came to try and bully him into acquiescence. Needless to say all the intimidation he could bring forth did not scare Haji, who threatened to throw him downstairs. He solved the question himself by falling over asleep, after a pause for the thought which his fuddled condition made difficult. Such are some—I hope not all—of the Sultan's officers. This one had passed through the military school at Bagdad, but as I afterwards heard how this feat may be performed—being literally little more than a passage through the establishment in the case of certain favoured individuals—I understood how he had become a military officer.

One morning I received a polite note in Turkish from the postmaster—with whom I was not acquainted—asking me to come and see him. So I took my way along the dusty hot road, past the innumerable cafés full of hunch-backed, uniformed Turks, till I found the office. To-day not being post-day, the postmaster reclined in an arm-chair behind a table, smoking cigarettes. On my arrival, he saluted me very politely by my name, talking Turkish. It was, of course, not to be expected that he would state his business till after some small talk, so we conversed about various subjects till he worked round to that of antiques, upon which he was an enthusiast. "Antiques"

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in this country mean coins, and Assyrian cylinders, little cylindrical pieces of stone with images and figures carved upon them. He had invited me there to benefit by the opinion I must have formed upon the value of antiquities, for Ferangistan to him was a place where half the world sought antiques, and consequently anyone who had been there, as he heard I had, must know the value of such relics as were to be found near Kirkuk.

Having thus prepared me, he shut the door, and produced with *empressement* a small bag of coins and seals from his stamp-safe. These were for the most part early Muhammadan, a Parthian or two, and a few Assyrian pieces. The greatest treasure—to him—was a George III. five-pound piece, upon which he put a fabulous value. Beyond telling the probable date of his antiques I could not help him, but he pressed so hard—thinking my unwillingness to mention prices was due to an idea of purchasing—that at last I proposed some values which I was pleased to see highly gratified him. In these regions there is always a good market for antiques among the Turks and Christians, who buy them, gradually collecting a stock, and then take them to Constantinople in the hopes of selling for a fortune.

Coming back that morning I remember buying some lettuces of an old man, who cleaned and washed them for his purchasers. The price, which gives a good idea of the price of vegetables and fruit, was two lettuces for three "pul," seven of which make a "qamari," which is equivalent to three-farthings, so the lettuce worked out at about the twenty-fourth part of a penny each.

In this stands explained the tenacity with which two persons will haggle for an hour over fractional sums, for the acquisition of a farthing means a considerable part of a meal gained.

One morning early, the muleteer Rashid came along and woke me. The effendi under whose wing it had been arranged for us to go had suddenly made up his mind the day before, and was now ready. So hurriedly we loaded up, and barely getting time to bid farewell to Haji Rasul,

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who commended me to God and the saints, we filed out into the yet empty streets to the meeting-place outside the town. Just as we got there and saw ahead a collection of mules, foot-passengers, and soldiers, the day broke, and we bade farewell to this remote corner of Turkey for a time.

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CHAPTER VII

CHALDEANS

THE course of our narrative will take us on into Kurdistan, and among peoples different to those we have met in our journeyings from the Mediterranean and the eastern border of Mesopotamia. We have had occasion to notice various races and peoples in passing, but of all these, those who have by their high antiquity of descent the premier claim to description are the Chaldeans, to whom up to the present we have not given more than casual notice. As we are about to pass out of the land of their ancestors, into the hills and mountains of the semi-independent Kurds, this opportunity for adequate remark upon the interesting Chaldean race cannot be passed.

The traveller of to-day, once he passes Urfa to go east, meets, besides Armenians and Christians of Greek descent, large numbers of the non-Muhammadan population who, in various places, go under a variety of names—Nestorians, Nasara, Kaldani, Jacobites, Catholics, New Chaldeans, Inglisi, Amrikani, and Protestan—the last three in north-west Persia. These varied sects are all branches of the Chaldean and Assyrian race, lineal descendants of the two nations that occupied the Tigris valley as far from the mouth as Jaziri ibn Umar; and the lower Euphrates valley, or Babylonia.

It is now 2500 years since the Assyrian nation broke up, and but a little less since the second Chaldean period was brought to an end by Alexander the Great; and since then, the Assyrians or Chaldeans (for they were the same race) have been in subjection to alien rulers, though the

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powerful and tenacious nature of the Chaldeans has won for them a premier place in the civil life of all ages, and is to-day the means of furnishing a great part of western Asia with a class of merchants and villagers on a far higher scale of civilisation and culture than the peoples among whom they live.

Many writers, and many residents in the countries inhabited by "native" Christians have given unrestrained exercise to their pens in describing their disgusting character, their deceit, their petty spirit, their unfaithfulness, and so on. Nor can any deny that this is only too true in many cases. Certainly the Christian who comes in contact with the European is often a very disagreeable character, but it would be but fair to him to mention, if possible, any member of any Oriental race or faith—particularly Semitic—whose moral standard was not debased by intercourse with Europeans, and the usual imitation of European vice, consequent upon a mistaken idea of Western catholicism and progress. It will be readily appreciated that the Christian naturally follows this line of conduct sooner and with more facility than the Muhammadan, the intrinsic aloofness of whose faith holds him off from a ready adoption of Western habits, good or bad, particularly in the case of the Semitic Muhammadan.

Our sources of information upon the origin of the Christian Church in Mesopotamia are unfortunately extremely scanty, and it is only by references to passing events that occur in purely secular works that we are enabled to follow the course of dissemination of the doctrines of Jesus Christ in the Middle East. To adherents of the English Protestant Church the history of the Chaldean or Eastern Church should have a special interest, for the old Chaldeans followed a scheme of tenets more similar to those of the English Church than of any other section of the much-divided Christian religion. Sir H. Layard, who stayed among the Chaldeans of Mosul in 1840, in his work on Nineveh remarks: "To Protestants, the doctrine and rites of a primitive sect of Christians,

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who have ever remained untainted by the superstitions of Rome[1] must be of high importance."

We have no ground for any assumption, such as has been made, that Christianity was carried by the old road through Urfa and Nisibis, to Assyria by a follower of SS. Barnabas and Paul to Nineveh, or one other of the cities which still stood upon the sites of old Assyrian capitals. Nevertheless, in A.D. 410, when Yezdijird I. of Persia reigned, Christianity was a recognised part of the social structure of Assyria and Persia. Obviously for such progress to have been made as to render Christianity one of the accepted religions in those regions, points to the fact that preachers and priests must have commenced their itineraries a great while before A.D. 400.

It was the Assyrians, or Chaldeans, who as a nation adopted speedily the tenets of the new faith. Doubtless after the demolition of Assyria, and then of Babylonia, the worship of Bel and Ishtar, the ancient gods, had fallen into abeyance or even total desuetude, and the remnants of the old nation seized upon the new religion to satisfy the spiritual need that every people experiences. Their prelates and dignitaries soon became a very important part of the Christian organisation, and it is interesting to note the sympathy of the Persian Sasanian kings for this new religion, and the success Christian effort met among the Persians. This ancient and highly civilised people, whose character contains a great deal of the speculative, has always been ready to consider the claims of new Deistic theories, and has, in Muhammadan times, found an outlet for its speculative tendency in the adoption of Shiism, which it has made a purely Persian section of Islam. The early Christians looked, perhaps with a warranted hope, upon the field of Persia, for here were no feats of iconoclasm to perform—no Diana, no Jove, no Venus, disputed with Christ the right to men's adoration.

[1] Ichabod! the proud day of that statement is passed away, and so is the greater part of the Chaldean Church—"the superstitions of Rome" have captured the Chaldeans, though not, I fear, in fair contest.

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In Persia they found a tolerance broad as her mighty plains, a dualist theory that provided only for principles of good and evil, as sharply defined as her barren hills, a splendid isolation of thought far above the turmoil of degraded passion that then represented the pantheistic doctrines of the Greeks, Romans, and Assyrians themselves. High ideals, spiritual aims of an altitude unknown to the Western materialists, found themselves in singular harmony with the ascetic idea of early Christianity.

We must understand that of all places, near and remote, it was Persia and the Zoroastrian people, the Perso-Aryans, and probably the Medes—or races inhabiting modern Kurdistan—that welcomed Jesus Christ's doctrines, and hailed their purifying influences with the delight of the neophyte to whom the master's knowledge is revealed. So we are told by a Chaldean bishop, writing in A.D. 400, that Yezdijird I., king of Persia, was a merciful and good ruler, just and kindly.[1] And so after, it was the known sympathy and support of the Persians that gained for the new Church the name of "The Persian Party."

This name was given after Nestorius himself, excommunicated from the Byzantine Church, had found asylum under Yezdijird, and the support given by this king was extended also by his son Firuz (A.D. 459-484), who took under his protection later dissenters from the Western Church.

In A.D. 410 the great dissension between Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople, and St Cyril, upon various points of doctrine, arose, and resulted in the split which gave birth to the new sect called the Nestorians. Throughout the controversy—resulting in the General Council at Ephesus in 431—Nestorius had been supported by the Eastern Bishops, and it was natural that after the rupture, the Chaldeans, who sent them, should join the ranks of, or rather become themselves, the Nestorians.

[1] "The good and merciful King Yezdijird, the blessed amongst the kings, may he be remembered with blessing, and may his future be yet more fair than his earlier life! Every day he doeth good to the poor and distressed."—Browne, *Lit. Hist.*, vol. i., p. 135.

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The doctrines of Nestorius were not by any means novel, nor, to those who would regard Christianity as a whole, sufficiently important to cause a split, or occasion such venom as has unfortunately always been characteristic of the militant sectaries of the religion of peace. The Bishop of Tarsus, Diodorus, had already promulgated Nestorius' doctrines among the Western Assyrians, and as they were gradually accepted, their upholders gained the name of the Persian party, partly because of the situation of the new sect, and partly on account of the sympathy of the Persian kings.

From this time the tenets of Nestorius, stamped out in Syria and western Asia, became exclusively identified with the Chaldean nation, and the first existence of the Nestorian Church or Assyrian Church began about A.D. 450, or earlier.

From now till the advent of Muhammad, the Church may be said to have prospered. It had vicissitudes certainly, for it was not in such a position as to dictate to rulers and kings. It is, again, a sorry feature of Christianity that we are told that during that time all the persecution they suffered was from the Christian Byzantine Empire, and all the sympathy and protection they obtained from the Zoroastrian monarchs of Persia.

Among these stands out the exception of Kawad, king of Persia, who is described by Chaldean priests of the period as a monster; war also did its work in harassing the Church, but we have no reason to believe that it did not harass the idolaters as well, for the Persians, whose armies continually scourged Mesopotamia, were not admittedly of the religion of any of the invaded peoples, while inclining to the doctrines of Christianity, as we have seen already.

During these times the great college of Edessa (Urfa), which the Isaurian Zeno had closed on account of its Nestorian doctrines, was transferred to Jund-i-Shapur, near the modern Shushtar, in Elam, into Persian territory, for there the Chaldeans were sure of protection and sympathy from a people whose talent has ever been for

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literature and learning. And the hope of the exiled priests was well justified. The place of exile became a cherished home, and the medical college of Edessa grew at Jund-i-Shapur to a great missionary and educational centre.

From Jund-i-Shapur, already in the territory of the Persian shahs, missionaries were sent out to every Eastern country, Chaldeans by birth and tongue, speaking Persian, and their enterprise carried them to India, Turkestan, and China. So great had become the hold of Christianity upon Persia, that at a very early date the country was divided into bishoprics.

This college was established about A.D. 550 by Nushirvan the Just, shah of Persia, one of the last of the Zoroastrian kings, and of the Sasanian dynasty. Through all the later ages of Persia and Arabia he has been the subject of eulogy, by Christian and Muhammadan alike, for his great justice, a virtue more highly esteemed in the East than by us, because so much rarer. Although he never became confessedly Christian, his sympathies with the Christians were such as to induce him to make a Chaldean woman his queen. Her son was brought up as a Christian, and by his zeal he provoked admonition from his father, whose policy seems to have dictated an impartial attitude toward all faiths.

Had his relationship with, and just bearing towards, Christians been insufficient to gain their gratitude and esteem,[1] he would have won it by his persecution of the peculiar sect of Mazdak, which the Christians had regarded with loathing and horror.

It is difficult to come at a true appreciation of Mazdak's character and doctrines, for all we know of either has been recorded by sectaries of other religions, Christian, Zoroastrian, and Muhammadan, and such reports are naturally prejudiced.

[1] Browne, *Lit. Hist.*, vol. i., p. 168, quotes the gratitude Christians bore Nushirvan, for they "gave a touching proof of their gratitude for his favours a century later, when they would not suffer the remains of his unfortunate descendant Yazdigird III. . . . to lie unburied."

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In general the scheme was a communistic idea which involved mystic rites; the property of men, even to their wives, was common to all, and certain regulations for daily life were imposed, notably the prohibition from eating flesh and shedding blood, which last law excited the extreme abhorrence of priests of other faiths.

The sect arose and was favoured in the reign of that Kawad before mentioned, who probably earned the execration of the Christians and Zoroastrians alike by his favouritism of the Mazdakites, perhaps induced by hopes of quelling the great power the Zoroastrian priests had acquired.

Nushirvan, however, while yet Crown Prince, instituted a policy of repression that ended in a massacre of Mazdakites, and the execution of Mazdak himself, at which some Christian Persians and the court physician, a Christian priest, were present. This occurred only after Nushirvan (then known as Khosru) had exposed to his father the king, the means by which Mazdak performed his miracles. During the long and glorious reign of this prince, perhaps the most peaceable and tolerant period of that age, the Christians made great progress in Persia. Nushirvan, though refraining from any committal of his own convictions, imported to his college Greek philosophers and adherents of Nestorius, and went so far as to make with the Byzantines a treaty which protected them.

So at this time, the latter end of the 6th century, we have a pleasant enough picture of Persia excellently ruled by a monarch of broad views, whose queen and eldest son were Christians; whose courtiers, doctors, and advisers counted in their ranks men of the same faith; whose principal college, the glory of his life, was a Christian institution. Small wonder, then, that the Chaldeans looked with high hope upon the future, when Zoroastrianism should pass away to give place to a Christian Persia.[1]

[1] None can tell, naturally, what would have been the condition of the Middle East had Muhammad never appeared, but while it would quite possibly have been Christian, it would have been a very debased

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But while Nushirvan dreamed of empire, and the Christians of religious supremacy, there was born he who would sweep before him the Persian Empire and the priests of Zoroaster, leaving but a remnant in their original domains. For Muhammad Mustafa—"The Prophet"—was born about this time, and mentioned it himself later—"I was born," said he, "in the time of the just king," *i.e.*, Nushirvan, shah of Persia.

Nushirvan died 578 A.D., and was followed by a number of weak monarchs till the ill-fated Yazdijird III., last Zoroastrian king of Persia, who, defeated at Qadasiyya by the Arabs in A.D. 635, died, an exile, in Khurasan, in A.D. 651.

At this, one of the most important turning-points in the history of the East, and the occasion of the inception of a doctrine that numbers among its adherents a large portion of the total population of the world, it is advisable to turn aside for a moment from the history of the Eastern Christians to ascertain in what condition the Church was at that time. Most commentators upon Islam and the Christianity of this period agree that the Church of Jesus Christ had, by its adoption of various heterodox ideas, become split up into little more than a widely spread religion, which, while nominally one in faith and aim, was actually nothing more than a number of sects at war with one another upon points of dogma, and generally sunk in corruption. This certainly was the case among the Christians of the West under the Byzantine Emperors, and the Syrian or Arab Christians of Western Arabia and Damascus. In such confusion was the Christian Church in these parts that Muhammad in seeking between the two great faiths of his land, Judaism and Christianity, for material wherewith to compile the Quran, turned away from the involved and contradictory views of the

faith; for even in those days before Islam, wherever the Christian Church had wandered far from Chaldea, it had become terribly corrupt, and doctrines crept in that almost took from it the right to be called Christian.

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Christian priests, to the more comprehensible doctrine of the Jews.

But we are concerned with the Nestorians alone, and of all the sects, or schisms, this was the least corrupted in fundamental idea, and we find that it compared very favourably in organisation and unity of purpose, with the almost idolatrous sects of the Syrian and Coptic Churches.

Secessions and heresies occurred in Malabar, Socotra, and Diarbekr, but the original Nestorian idea seems to have been generally retained, namely, that of the dual nature of Jesus Christ, one personality the man, and the other the Word of God, and the refusal of the title of "Mother of God" to the Virgin Mary, who, they said, was the carnate vessel, albeit purified, that received the purely material seed communicated by a miracle, and therefore the mother of the man Jesus, the carnate individuality.

At any rate it may be seen that such doctrines, in themselves the result of speculation, are by no means bound to be the final expression of speculation, which is ever progressive, and it is hardly remarkable that many sub-theories should have sprung into existence among the Chaldeans. Yet we notice that the Chaldean Church existed, homogeneous, through the great bulk of its immensity from the year 410 till about the 17th century, a fact which speaks as no argument can for its unity of idea and teaching, as compared with the lamentable condition of the degraded Christian institutions of Syria and Greece.

In the first years of Islam there was more tolerance for Christianity than ever afterwards, as well as for Jews. Even Zoroastrians met with a certain consideration owing to a half-reverence Muhammad had accorded to their prophet. The Christians and Jews, however, were "People of the Book"—that is, people of a revealed faith—and as such entitled to more merciful treatment than pagans and idolaters. Moreover, Muhammed was considerably indebted to Christians and Jews for a great part of the Quran; and a Nestorian priest, Sergius, is said to have

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assisted him in the compilation of certain chapters. In answer to an accusation by the Arabs that he was assisted by a foreigner, the passage in the Surah ul Nahl (The Chapter of the Bee) was "revealed." "We also know that they say, 'Verily a certain man teacheth him to compose the Quran.' The tongue of the person to whom they incline is a foreign tongue, whereas the Quran is written in the perspicuous Arabic tongue."

So, while Muhammad displayed the greatest abhorrence for all Christian symbols, execrating above all the cross or crucifix, yet he did not force them to retract their beliefs, and arranged a special code of treatment for them, particularly exempting them from military service, in lieu of which they paid a poll-tax, or "jaziya."[1]

In the case of towns and countries which submitted to the Islamic army, the generals of Muhammad entered into covenants of protection in some cases, agreeing to protect them as long as they paid this tax, and there is ground for believing that the treaty between Muhammad and the Chaldean Church, of which an exact copy was published in A.D. 1630,[2] but the authenticity of which is doubtful, existed in some form. By the terms of this treaty the Nestorians were protected and exempted from many vexatious taxes.

The Chaldeans now entered upon a second period of prosperity, which lasted 200 years, and during which under the early Khalifas they attained premier positions in all matters of philosophy, learning, and even statesmanship, causing more than once complaints from the less gifted and, consequently, the less favoured Musulman Arabs. The 2nd century of this period, from the time of the battle of the Zab (see p. 107), when a Persian dynasty reigned, was as well the golden age of the Khalifate as of the later Chaldean Church. Under the

[1] An enormous amount of feeling has been recently roused upon this subject in Turkish dominions, by the resolve of the new Turkish Majlis to abolish the jaziya and make Christians and Jews serve in the army.

[2] *Testimentum Mahometi* (Paris : Sionita, 1630).

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beneficent rule of the earlier Abbasid Khalifas (among whom were the renowned Harun al Rashid and Ma'mun) the patriarchate was transferred to Bagdad, and a new bishopric was founded at Kufa, the very heart and centre of Islam. Under the Khalifas Ma'mun and Harun al Rashid particularly, the Chaldeans found themselves in the greatest favour. Their colleges were protected, and as they were versed in many languages and sciences, their priests and philosophers were given the translation into Arabic of books from the Greek, Persian, and Chaldean languages. It is to the Chaldeans of this time that Islam is indebted for many of the Greek authors' works, particularly Aristotle, whose philosophical treatises have been ever popular among the Arabs.

Undoubtedly, both Arabian letters and the Chaldean Church reached their highest point in the period A.D. 809-813, the Khalifate of Ma'mun, and we may here remark upon the extent of the Church at that date. There were then, or soon after, as many as twenty-five bishoprics all over Asia,[1] for the missionaries sent out in the 5th century had not been idle, as we shall see later.

However, this, the brightest period of Islam and Christianity, was sadly darkened by the accession of one of the monsters of history to the Khalifal throne. After the Khalifa Ma'mun came Al Mu'tasim, a famous ruler also, who transferred the capital to Samerra, higher up

[1] The Bishoprics were: 1. Elam (Arabistan of south-west Persia); 2. Nisibis (north-east Mesopotamia); 3. Basra (Persian Gulf); 4. Assyria (tract between the Zab rivers); 5. Beth Qurma, in Assyria; 6. Hulvan, in western Persia (now called Zuhab, a Kurdish province); 7. Persia; 8. Merv; 9. Herat; 10. Arabia; 11. China; 12. India; 13. Armenia; 14. Syria; 15. Azarbaijan (north-west Persia); 16. Ray and Tabaristan (northern Persia); 17. Dailam (south coast of the Caspian Sea); 18. Samarqand (Transoxiana); 19. Kashgar and Turkestan (Tartary); 20. Balkh and Tucharestan; 21. Sistan (eastern Persia); 22. Khan Baligh (Pekin); 24. Tanguth (Tartary); 25. Chasemgara and Nuachita (Tartary).—(From Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains*, vol. i., p. 257.) From the twelfth bishopric were descended the Christians of St John of Malabar. That of Persia included the Bishopric of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf, said to have been founded by one Theophilus, about A.D. 350.

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the Tigris than Bagdad, and he was followed by Al Wathiq, and then by Al Mutawakkil in A.D. 847, who degraded the high office he held as much as his greater predecessors had exalted it.

One of his first acts was to favour the very brutal Turkish soldiers and ruffians in his service, abasing the Persians and Arabs who had served his brother and predecessor. It was not sufficient for him to degrade thus the faithful servants about him; he went on—in the excess of orthodox zeal he displayed as a counterfoil to his drunkenness and debauchery—to defile and destroy the graves of the martyrs of the Shi'a section, to cause to be disgracefully ridiculed the memory of Ali, a saint revered by Sunni and Shi'a alike, and to murder countless adherents and admirers of those martyrs. Every degradation and disgrace he could thrust upon the Jews and Christians he did, causing them to wear garments of conspicuous and unpleasant hues, "parti-coloured badges, and caps, and girdles of certain ignoble patterns, to ride only on mules and asses, with wooden stirrups and saddles of strange construction, and to have placed over their houses effigies of devils."[1]

The college of Jund-i-Shapur, that Nushirvan had founded, was deprived by him of all its rights, and the director, one Bokht Yishu, banished to Bahrain. The churches of the Christians were destroyed or used as mosques, and various rules prevented their proclaiming their religion while living by any signs, or when dead by tombstones.

In the long record of philosophers, literati, and authors of the earlier times of Islam it is hardly surprising to find almost a blank between the years 847 and 861, when Mutawakkil was murdered during a fit of drunkenness by the Turks, whom he had preferred to all others.

All the persecution the Christians now suffered was not enough to extinguish their influence, and they partially regained their position in the 11th century under the Seljuq monarchs, and right up to the time of the terrible scourge

[1] Muir's *Caliphate*, pp. 521-2.

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of the Mongols under Chengiz Khan and Hulagu Khan, they still occupied positions of some importance, and were as yet a cognate church of some extent. Far beyond the bounds of Islam they were busy; busy upon a scheme which they hoped would crush Islam and exalt Christianity all over Asia, from Pekin to Syria. This scheme was no less than the invasion of Asia by the Tartar kings of Qarakorum, whose power was growing fast, and whose thirst for land was growing keener. The Christians, meanwhile, strove to make the religion of Jesus Christ the national faith before the day of conquest dawned, and had certainly made great progress among various Mongol people when the hordes poured out westwards.

It will be remembered that in very early days missionaries had been sent to China and Turkistan, and they had acquired considerable influence over the Khans of Tartary, some of whom are said to have been converted to Christianity. The famous Prester John, whose name has been obscured behind many absurd legends, was one of these rulers.[1]

The campaign carried on from Merv, the see of the Chaldean Bishop of Tartary, succeeded to such a degree as to win to Christianity a large number of the female members of the ruling families, and an important nomad tribe called the Keraite, whose capital was in Qarakorum, in the Altai Mountains. Yet, of the actual invaders of the West none were won over, being frankly pagans, making a policy of equal freedom for all religions, but adhering to none. Thus, while several were of Christian mothers, and were even baptized in infancy, receiving Christian names, they retained no sign of their origin when come to power, changing the names of their infancy to Tartar titles, and forgetting the religion of their childhood.

In China the missionaries had had equal success, as is witnessed by the tablet found at Se-gan-fu, which described the favour which had met their doctrine from both king

[1] A very interesting letter regarding the state and pomp of this khan is quoted in Layard's *Nineveh and its Remains*, vol. i., pp. 250-4.

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and country, mentioning also the names of Chinese Christian bishops and mandarins of that faith. From this interesting tablet it was first ascertained that, up to A.D. 781, the date of the inscription, the Chaldeans had pushed so far as China, and the revelation of the existence of a recognised Church there was so astonishing to the critics, as to throw discredit upon the monument for some time.[1]

Towards the fall of the Khalifate, the Chaldeans, seeing their Church in Persia almost extinct, and in Mesopotamia confined, and melting before the gradual absorption by Islam, turned the eyes of hope towards these Mongol states, aspiring to find in them a weapon to drive out Islam. That it acted against Islam, dealing it almost a death-blow, is well known; but the too sanguine Christians did not foresee that it would be at the hands of two of the Mongol Khans, one a baptized Christian, that the Nestorian Church should suffer persecution and massacre, and its remnants be forced to save themselves by flight to the inaccessible mountains of the Kurds. For it was not at all a zeal for Christianity that urged the Mongols on, though the reports by Chaldean priests of Western wealth may have excited the greed of the Khans. Just at the period before the great invasions, the opening of the 13th century, missionary effort had redoubled, and Roman Catholics for the first time appeared on the scene, many courageous monks daring the dangerous voyage from Europe to the unknown East. The tolerance of Chengiz Khan, first Mongol emperor, was responsible in a great measure for this renewed enthusiasm, which was the more sanguine in remembering that Islam does not proselytise.

But the terrible invasion of Hulagu Khan, that swept great and small, faithful and infidel, before it, broke both Christianity and Islam for a time, striking at the heart of

[1] *Vide* Layard, *Nineveh*, vol. i., p. 245, for a full description of the monument and a part translation. More recent discoveries in the 20th century have confirmed this inscription, which was first seen in A.D. 1625.

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both, Bagdad, which was reduced to ruins among scenes of the most terrible inhumanity ever witnessed.[1]

Hulagu, himself pagan, acknowledging no power, superhuman nor human, but himself, was followed by successors who first embraced Buddhism and later Islam, most noteworthy of whom was Ghazan Khan (A.D. 1295), who destroyed thousands of Christians all over Tartary, Persia, and Mesopotamia.

Now Islam had gained over the devastating Tartars, and began to revive as a religion, though the high degree of culture of former days was obviously not to be looked for under the rule of barbarians. But Christianity, persecuted, despised, and detested alike by Mongol and Arab, waned, and its adherents became obscure and humble. Nevertheless, though the great Chaldean Church no longer existed as before, its amputated members in China and India being separated from the central Church, its headquarters demolished, and its priests scattered, yet a great number of Christians still lived in the domains of the Mongol Emperors till the second period of invasion, when Timur-i-Lang (Tamerlane) emulated by his ferocity the earlier and pagan invaders. Among the many cruelties he committed was the massacre of Christians. From the first (A.D. 1380), he made a point of persecuting these people, his design being obviously to exterminate the whole race and religion. Not content with destroying what remained of their churches, he pursued them in every part of Persia, Chaldea, and Babylonia, till he had driven them out of the lands of their ancestors, and their panic-stricken remnants found refuge among the remote valleys and hills of the Kurds, whom even Tamerlane could not assail.

The patriarchate, which had been removed to Mosul, was now transferred to Julamark, a village in the very

[1] From the accounts that are to be read of the invasion of Hulagu Khan, we learn thousands of details of the revolting and bestial nature of the inhuman Mongols, and of the ghoulish ingenuity of cruelty they displayed. These are fully described in the books of Planocarpini, Guillaume de Ruysbroeck, d'Ohsson, and others.

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heart of Kurdistan, out of the reach of any but the Kurds, who lived upon terms of friendliness till the Turks and priests ousted the fine old princes who ruled them there, and induced them to turn against the Chaldeans, in 1839.

The Roman Catholics had, through their missionaries, become aware of the existence of the great Chaldean Church, and now—to their eternal discredit be it said—they actually combined with the Turks to persecute the Chaldeans who yet remained in the foothills and plains near Mosul.

"By a series of the most open frauds, the Roman Catholic emissaries obtained many of the documents which constituted the title of the Chaldean Patriarch, and gave him a claim to be recognised and protected as the head of the Chaldean Church by the Turkish authorities. A system of persecution and violence which would scarcely be credited compelled the Chaldeans of the plain to renounce their faith and unite with the Church of Rome."[1]

However, these unsavoury operations took some time in development, and meanwhile we may see the progress of the emaciated Church—now at enmity with Muslim and Christian alike, finding only sanctuary from its foes among the savage Kurds, the terror of whose name kept the Turks away from the mountains.

The patriarchate in the 15th century was at Al Qush, not far from Mosul, but persecution growing more persistent, and many being forced into the Catholic ranks, the existing patriarch Mar Elias was ignored by the orthodox Chaldeans farther east, and the patriarch Mar Shimun at Julamark was elected, whose descendants, always bearing the name Shimun, are still the leaders of the now almost extinct old Chaldean Church.

In the 16th century the Roman Catholics having by the means employed sufficiently subdued the Chaldeans nominally Catholic, nominated a patriarch, and founded thus a patriarchal line in the name of Yusif, whom they

[1] Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains*, vol. i., p. 259.

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established at Diarbekr, placing him over the Catholic Chaldeans without in any way consulting their wishes.

While this Catholic Chaldean section continued, by the exertions of missionaries, to enlist more recruits from the Chaldeans of the plains, the orthodox party in the mountains was gaining strength and confidence. Among the rough and fierce Kurds they became, too, warlike. Adopting Kurdish dress and habits it was almost impossible to tell them from the hereditary mountaineers, with whom they lived upon the best of terms. Inaccessible as were their villages and castles, the Turks were forced to leave them independent, though they nominally admitted the Sultan as lord of the soil they inhabited. It was not till 1839 that the Turkish Government officials encouraged the revengeful spirit of Nurullah Bey, a Hakkiari Kurd, who was at blood-feud with some Chaldeans, and Badar Khan Bey, who was better remembered than the greater man.

A very significant fact in support of the assertion that the Kurds were incited to rise, is the treatment of Badar Khan Bey, when, after the repeated protests and considerable pressure from Europe, the Sultan was forced to capture him. The officer deputed to this task, one Osman Pasha, made such lenient terms with the Kurdish chief as made it practically certain that he had not been acting without the acquiescence of the Turks. Nor was any part of the Kurdish territory invaded, except in the expedition against Bader Khan Bey, after which the troops were withdrawn. The opinions of contemporary Chaldeans, as expressed in some old letters I saw at Mosul, confirm these views, and state that the Kurds, although ever alive to the supposed wealth of the Chaldeans, had been always on fairly good terms with them; indeed, as we have seen, for over four hundred years they had lived side by side without any disturbances occurring.

The Mar Shimun of the period fled, during the massacres, to Urumiah, where were settled a number of Chaldeans, but returned later to Julamark, and was pensioned by the Turkish Government, thereby giving

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up the last remnants of any pretensions to independence that his people might have preserved. His successors have further weakened their positions by giving way to an overwhelming passion for intrigue, and, occupied with these discreditable operations, in which they try to involve American and Protestant missionaries, they have lost most of their hold over the Church, leaving the field open to the energetic assaults of the Catholics.

In January this year (1909) a new massacre of old Chaldeans occurred in the neighbourhood of S'airt, near Bitlis, a district where the Chaldeans have sunk into such a position of degradation, physical and moral, as to leave them little more than savages. Their priests are in some cases not sufficiently instructed to say the ordinary services, and the people are reported as complaining bitterly that they do not know whom they are supposed to worship, nor what is the significance of the word "Christian." This condition of affairs has obtained for a long time now. For many years, under the vitiated governmental system of Turkey, the Kurds have been allowed to do as they please with the possessions of the Chaldean peasants, no steps ever being taken against them by the Turks, at once complaisant and afraid. It is a noteworthy fact that under the Shi'a rule of Persia the Chaldeans have prospered, and the miserable creatures they call "Gavarnai," who come, naked and hungry, fleeing down the mountain slopes from Turkish territory, are almost a different race from the educated and progressive Chaldeans of Urumia and Salmas in Persia.

The Roman Catholic Chaldeans in Turkish territory have increased in numbers since the split in 1550, all those about Mosul and in Diarbekr being of that persuasion. However, Roman Catholicism received a shock in 1869, when the Bull of Papal Infallibility was issued, and a section was led by Thomas Ronkus, the Mutran Mallus, and Kas Jacob Naaman, afterwards Archbishop of Bagdad—which was called the New Chaldeans, that split from the Roman Catholics.

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The clauses of the Bull to which these objected were :—

1. That a bishop cannot be made without Papal sanction.

2. That three candidates for archbishoprics must proceed to Rome, of whom the Pope will choose one and reject two.

3. All the revenues of the Church are to be sent to Rome.

It appears that the Mutran Mallus, who had been sent by the Patriarch Yusif Odo to Rome, at first accepted the Bull, but that upon the Armenian Catholic Church splitting on the same subject, the Patriarch Yusif Odo and his mutrans seceded, and betook themselves to Al Qush, and in the village of Dar el Sayeda appointed four mutrans without interrogating Rome. One of these, Elie, however, deserted to the Dominicans at Mosul, and was made a full priest, afterwards becoming Bishop of Jazira ibn Umar. In 1875 Yusif Odo re-entered the Roman Catholic Church, leaving the New Chaldean sect under the Mutran Mallus. After the decease of the Yusif Odo, which occurred shortly after his desertion of the New Chaldeans, Elie was appointed in his place, and at once directed his energies towards regathering the little sect into the Catholic fold.

He was assisted in a measure by the departure of Mallus for Malabar, and after his return, finding his people wavering, came with them to Mosul and re-entered the Roman Catholic Church.

One of the principal strongholds of this sect was Tel Kaif, a large village near Mosul, which had been one of the first to turn Roman Catholic.[1]

The Old Chaldeans have made several attempts to regenerate the old Church, and have appealed in every case to England for the assistance, for they have always

[1] This village, whose inhabitants would seem to have a special aptitude for river work, supplies deck-hands to the steamers of Messrs Lynch Bros., on the Tigris and Karun rivers, to the Turkish boats, and to the "Nusrat," a Persian steamer on the Karun. By this means the Chaldeans find themselves once more back in their ancient country, and there is now a priest at Ahwaz, not far from where his forbears taught in the great college of Jund-i-Shapur.

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considered themselves more in sympathy with the English Church than with any other.

In 1843, the year of the last massacre under Badar Khan Bey, communications were opened with Archbishop Howley, but no result was forthcoming. Previous to this, two gentlemen had visited Urumiah at the instance of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and the Royal Geographical Society, to report upon the condition of the Nestorians.

No substantial reply having been received to their appeals, the Chaldeans became discouraged, and it was Archbishop Tait in 1868 who received the next appeal, and after sending a clergyman to report, in 1881 he sent out a minister. Several years later the Archbishop of Canterbury's mission took form, and a complete staff came out to Urumiah, and was hailed with delight and gratitude by the Chaldeans; for it had come, not to win them over by force or persuasion to another faith, but to help them regenerate the ancient Church upon the lines of their own belief and tradition. Schools and colleges have been opened, as well for ordinary instruction as for priests and deacons.

Among the annals of self-sacrifice and hardship cheerfully endured must shine the name of the Rev. W. Brown, whom Mrs Bishop the traveller met in 1887, at Julamark, tramping from village to village, discredited and harassed by the Turks, living in the lowest poverty, and often going hungry and cold in the mountains. This priest exerted his endeavours to pacify the Kurds, who were exhibiting great hostility towards the Chaldeans, and he succeeded in preventing a massacre.

Meanwhile other proselytising bodies have not been idle. The Americans appeared in Urumiah and Turkish territory about 1818, and have a mission in the Urumiah district, a branch of that at Teheran, and a body of Chaldeans has left the old Church to follow the American Presbyterians, gaining for itself the name of Amrikani among other sects. The mission in Urumiah has distinguished itself by an ability to keep on good terms

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with the Kurds, one of whom was so friendly with Dr Cochrane in 1880, that when Shaikh Abaidulla invaded Persia, he spared Urumiah at the intercession of the missionary.

Not long after the Americans the French Lazarists appeared, and established themselves near Salmas. The original priests, Fathers Cluzel and Darnes, experienced some difficulty and were nearly expelled, for the Russians induced the Shah to issue a "farman," or royal command, prohibiting Christians from changing their religion. However, the mission survived, and has now schools and priests at Urumiah and Khosrova, near Dilman.

At this latter place the inhabitants, while nearly all confessing Roman Catholicism, lament the fact, for they assert that the means adopted by the missionaries have been underhand and deceitful in a degree only by those of their predecessors in Turkey. Certain it is, that they have by intimidation, by working upon personal disagreements, and by other even less creditable means, quite captured the population of the place, and obtained for themselves the best gardens and buildings, even constituting themselves arbitrators and lords of the water-supply, which they condescend to hand over to the five thousand odd inhabitants only after they have used so much as to ensure the success of their extensive crops, and their consequent enhanced price when those of the villages fail.

Such briefly is the history of the Chaldeans and Assyrians since their nation was broken up. At present they exist, as we have seen, in Urumiah of Persia, in central Kurdistan, in Mosul, and latterly in the new colony at Ahwaz.

Particular mention must be made of the colony in the old capital of the Ardalan princes of Kurdistan, Sina, where, under the enlightened rule of that ancient family they were originally granted refuge, and subsequently so protected and encouraged as to have made them what they are now, a wealthy and powerful, if not numerous body, living on terms of the greatest cordiality with the Kurds of the Persian province of Ardalan. Here

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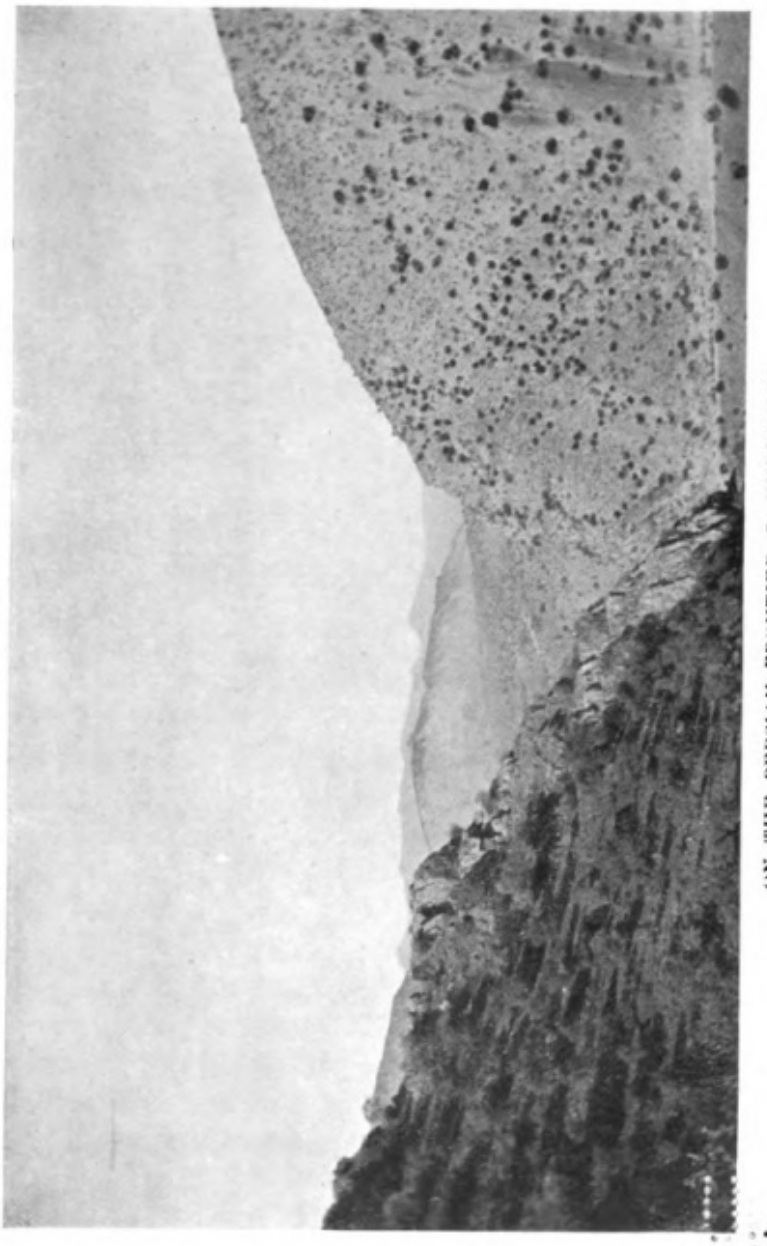

ON THE PERSIAN FRONTIER, S. KURDISTAN.

[*To face p.* 160.

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they possess a handsome school, the greater part of the money for which was subscribed by the Kurdish nobles of Sina, and at which many of the Kurdish lads receive instruction side by side with their Christian fellows.

There are also large colonies in Tiflis, and a considerable number have now settled in America, where they have generally been very successful.

The doctrine of Nestorius, that of the dual existence of Jesus Christ, has already been noted, and we may here briefly detail the tenets of the old Chaldean Church. The Creed is as follows:[1]—

"We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Creator of all things which are visible and invisible.

"And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only begotten of His Father before all worlds: who was not created: the true God of the true God: of the same substance with His Father, by Whose hands the worlds were made, and all things were created; Who for us men and for our salvation descended from Heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost, and became man, and was conceived and born of the Virgin Mary; and suffered and was crucified, in the days of Pontius Pilate; and died, and was buried, and rose on the third day, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into Heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of His Father; and is again to come to judge both the living and the dead.

"And we believe in one Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, who proceeded from the Father—the Spirit that giveth light.

"And in one Holy and Universal Church.

"We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins, and the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting."

There appears to be some doubt as to the number of sacraments, but seven is supposed to be the number.

In use and ritual there is a nearer approach to the proceedings of the English Church than to any other.

[1] Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains*, vol. i., pp. 262-3.

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Confession, transubstantiation, the existence of purgatory, exhibition of images, are the main points that are denied or prohibited; while they administer both elements to communicants who have been confirmed. The clergy were formerly all allowed to marry, and it was only the highest functionaries who discontinued the custom.

There are eight orders of clergy: Patriarch, Archbishop, Bishop, Archdeacon, Priest, Deacon, Subdeacon and Reader. As we have seen, the Patriarchal office is hereditary, and certain restrictions regulate the diet of the mother before the child's birth as well as his own diet during his life, when all meat is forbidden.

The fasts and feasts are extremely numerous, and all Chaldeans—Roman Catholic, Orthodox, or otherwise—are extraordinarily strict in the observance of such days in their respective sects, besides being very strict Sabbatarians.

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CHAPTER VIII

BY THE HAMAVANDS TO SULAIMANIA

Al Akrad Tāīfatun min al jinnī kashafa 'llāhu 'inhumu 'l ghitā'.
("The Kurds are a race of Jinn from whom God drew back the curtain," and revealed them.)

WE left Kirkuk soon after daylight one morning, and joined a large caravan going to Sulaimania under the protection of one Shefiq Effendi, an "askar katebi" or military accountant. As this was the first caravan for some time, a large number of persons availed themselves of the chance of getting to Sulaimania. Few merchants had dared the passage. The travellers were poor people on foot, various kinds of Kurds, a shopkeeper or two of Sulaimania, and a number of officials whom duty called. All these last were taking their womenfolk, and a spirit of fright hovered over these unfortunate females which communicated itself to some of the effendis. For even with the escort we had, it was a highly dangerous undertaking to attempt the passage across the Hamavand country. Their fears were well enough founded, for we had but seventy foot-soldiers, and armed though they might be with Mauser rifles, they could not hold their own against even an equal number of Hamavands, and they knew it.

The marching kit of these sturdy fellows was eminently practical. In these lands, where a man does not look for hot meals three times a day, nor fear sleeping in the open, the ordinary traveller makes his

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way under conditions which European soldiers would consider hard. So the soldier cannot be expected to carry multifarious knapsacks of field fodder. In fact, he differs from the rest of us merely in the possession of a good rifle and plenty of cartridges. For the rest he wears what shoes he pleases, none at all if it please him better, and he sleeps in the clothes he walks in, as does everybody else, not troubling about what he lies on nor what he pulls over him. We had among us two Christians, a Greek army chemist and his wife, a Chaldean of Kirkuk. He rode upon a donkey, or rather walked and let the ass carry his bedding, for it refused to carry him as well. His wife was perched upon their belongings high above a mule. One effendi was an army officer returning to Sulaimania, his native place, for he was a Kurd, and he had several Kurdish women with him, one on horseback and others astride laden mules. There was the usual number of small boys and babies in arms, and a Jew or two taking printed cottons to Kurdistan for sale.

Our mules carried some boxes of ammunition and a load of books—the new instructions of the Parliament for the regulation of rent contracts and municipal affairs. The muleteers were highly amused at this load, commenting upon the waste of money involved in sending regulations to a town where order never existed, and if it did, rent contracts and municipal affairs were unknown, even by name.

As one looks east from Kirkuk towards Kurdistan, a low range of red barren hills shuts out the view, and over these runs the road to Sulaimania, and after crossing the plain behind, through the only gap in a second range to the plain of Bazian, the centre of the Hamavand country. This gap is the place where the wild horsemen have always assaulted caravans going east, and two months after our journey to Sulaimania, attacked and totally defeated a body of soldiers, killing several, and capturing every arm and cartridge in their possession.

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But two days before we had started two ragged fellows had come in from this gap to Kirkuk—two long days' journey—and described the sack of a small caravan there; so prospects for us were not bright.

Judge, then, of the joy when our leader, the Shefiq Effendi, struck off the road and began taking a course among some low hills almost due north. For by so doing he left almost behind us the Hamavand country and headed for that of the Shuan Kurds, a powerful but peaceable tribe engaged in the keeping of flocks and herds—as their name implies.[1]

By noon we were appreciably rising, the hills were closing in, and we could never see far ahead, for the track wound in and out among steep downs. We passed a Kurdish village, a collection of huts upon a mound, about this time. The women, unveiled, bright in coloured robes, turbaned as only Kurdish women are, came out to stare and to inform men within of our arrival. Soon mounted men came galloping over the hills, appearing from apparently deserted corners of the landscape, and approached our leader. Coming up to him they dismounted and took his hand, greeting him with affection, and then we discovered that he—the military accountant—was a chief of the tribe. And no sooner were we away from Kirkuk, than away went the fez from off his head, to be replaced by a Kurdish handkerchief. Despite the invitation of these villagers, our leader would not stop, and we continued our way through the valleys. Here in some places, surrounded by hills, the wind dropped, and the sun's heat became so intense as to make the hardiest of these inured folk complain.

We entered one of these valleys, or rather, small flat plains between hills, and here the heat became intense. No breath of wind stirred, and the unfortunate soldiers began to look very sick and weary. Everybody carried some water, but it was quickly finished, and to add to the annoyance of the intense heat, myriads of small

[1] Kurdish "shuan"—a shepherd.

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agile flies buzzed about the head, settling in eyes and ears and sticking to the lips. One of the women fainted, and fell from her mule; those of the men that had turbans spread the handerchiefs that composed them, holding out corners to shade their heads. Around us, sitting upon the edge of some cliffs, were rows and rows of solemn vultures, a fitting feature of this landscape, where were but the bare stones of the valley, not an inch of shade, nor a blade of grass, nor a drop of water, and a silence and repose more deadly than the uproar of the worst storm. The sweat ran off down the face from the hair, down the chest it rolled, to soak through the clothes into the bedding one sat on. The mules sweated and stank, and the dust rose, choking one's already parched throat.

For two hours we wound along the flat thus, till we reached the end of the valley, where the hills closed in, and the track mounted here. For another half-hour we crawled up, zig-zagging along a steep and stony path, and all at once met a breeze—and a view.

For before us were the higher hills of the Shuan downs—great green ridges and hill-sides, waving with long grass and bright with flowers. Deep, steep valleys lay in the shade between them, and in the distance, dim even in this clear air, rose the snowpeaks of the Zagros—and Persian Kurdistan.

We were now well within the Shuan country, and so long as our road lay in it we were safe, for the Hamavand would not come out of their own country into that of the Shuan, with whom they are friendly, besides having a goodly respect for the strength of this pastoral tribe. So we stopped at the first stream without thought of robbers, and threw our loads for a while. There was but a trickle, or rather, three pools in the bed of the stream, at the bottom of which a tiny spring bubbled up, and it was a long time before we all got a drink. There was one tree, too, in this delectable gully, and the soldiers promptly bivouacked under it, striking and beating other equally

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weary foot-passengers who would have shared the shade. Our particular party, which consisted of the original travellers from Mosul, fared better in the matter of water, for one of us discovered a fresh spring about a quarter of a mile lower down, whither we repaired with drinking-basins and earthen water-pots, and made an excellent meal from this and bread and dates. We were sleeping soundly—the sleep that comes quickly to the dweller in the open air, oblivious of the sun and flies—when the order came to load up; and as the effendi insisted upon our all starting together, there was a terrible rush.

Mule-loading is an awkward business, requiring at least two men. First the creature has to be brought alongside his load, which is two packages of equal weight, one to be suspended each side of him. These are already roped together, and to load, the two halves are lifted together to the top of the pack-saddle—about five feet six high. Then one of the men must run round to the other side, take the off half, pull it down and work it this way and that till it exactly balances its fellow on the opposite side. Then if there be a passenger, his bedding is thrown on top and a long girth thrown over and round all. This is quickly enough done under two conditions—first, that the mule be near his burden when the time comes for loading; and second, that he can be induced to stand while the packages are being lifted up and placed against the saddle. At this moment he has a habit of sidling away, and the load falls to the ground. Needless to say, after loading some sixteen mules, as we did twice a day, at express speed, a rest is very welcome, but one often has to walk a few miles over stony ground, urging the beasts when they lag, and the steep hill-sides frequently force everyone to dismount.

Out of the valley of the stream we came to a higher one between two long ridges of hills, and for three hours made our way northwards along it till we came to a village of the Shuan, prettily situated by a

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stream and several clumps of willows, and threw our loads upon the beaten ground round about.

The first proceeding when arranging for the night, is to arrange the loads in a kind of wall, and behind these one spreads felts and coats. Meanwhile the mules are led off to water, brought back, and the pack-saddles removed. The muleteers then clean the animals more or less with a rattling tin currycomb, replace the saddles, which act as blankets, and, tethering the beasts to a long line upon the ground, give them their barley.

In the meantime one goes off to the village—if there be any near—to find provender, which in the Kurdish country is a commodity called "du," the Persian "dugh." This is curds and whey watered to the consistency of milk, slightly sour, and always cool, for they keep it in porous skins—it is the most refreshing drink possible. Among the Kurds it is considered a mean action to sell such a thing, and this village was no exception to the rule. I undertook the task of getting for our party, and set off, entering the village through a broken courtyard wall, for there were no streets. After poking my head into several houses I found a good woman who was pouring out "du" into a wooden bowl, and demanded some, saying that there were several of us to share it. Without a word she handed me the skin, a bowl, and a deep spoon, and with all this a handful of flaps of new bread, answering my thanks with the Kurdish "Khwashit bi" ("May it pleasant to you"). Among the Kurds no one thinks of objecting to strangers walking into their houses, nor seeing the women, who walk about unveiled; indeed, they possess no veils. Perfect freedom of intercourse exists, and the womenfolk pause in their journeyings to and fro to chat and joke with all and sundry, beggar and effendi alike.

In the early morning, long before daylight, the sound of people moving woke us, and we rose to find marching orders already issued, and half the caravan

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loaded. One of us ran off to fill the water-pots at the stream, where the village women were already similarly engaged, while the rest of us fell to and loaded, and after a few minutes the caravan started. Dawn found us just topping a ridge, and at the fork of two foot-paths. Expecting to take that leading east, and towards Sulaimania, we were headed off by the soldiers to the northerly track, which eventually led us round the tops of some high hills, and along a steep ridge from which the ground sloped away with almost the gradient of a precipice. Beautiful gullies with running water and groves of trees branched off down below, and gave upon a broad plain where we could see the broad stream of the Lower Zab River flowing. Sulaimania now lay almost due south, and we could see its position by the great landmark of the Pir-i-Mugurun Mountain that rises to its north, a precipitous bluff about ten thousand feet high. Amid all these beautiful glades and this verdant pasture-land we saw nobody but a couple of parties of distant horsemen patrolling their country.

By noon we were very high up, in amongst the rolling hills, and suddenly coming upon a steep decline, we saw below us a large village protected by a strong castle upon a mound. This was one of the chief places of the Shuan tribe; and reaching it—by a devious and steep path—we threw our loads under some mulberry trees. This arrangement of breaking the journey half-way through the day is not unusual in Kurdistan, but I have never seen it done in Persia, where the stages are shorter.

The effendi went to a banquet already prepared for him in the castle, for runners, taking short ways over the hills, had advised the head-man of his arrival, and a sheep had been killed and roasted whole. The rest of us, after foraging for "du," lay down to sleep till the time should come to load once more.

This village is in a very remote corner of the Shuan country, off any main track, and the natives were so

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impressed by the size of our caravan, that they all came out upon their flat roofs to watch us depart. Indeed, so small is the traffic, that there was no path beyond the village, and a horseman accompanied us to show the nearest way to our next halting-place. The track took us up the flank of a precipitous hill, and once there, down a long, steep spine. Here the slope was so great that it was impossible to sit even upon a donkey, and the women, unused to much walking and hampered by unhandy garments, were in almost as much danger when on their own as upon their steeds' legs, of falling headlong down the steep to the stream that ran three hundred feet below.

At the bottom we had to face the next ridge, and over that another and steeper one, on the opposite side of which was a beautifully situated village, almost hidden amongst trees, with a couple of torrents running down between the houses. This was about the highest point of the Shuan lands, and from its summit we could see all their country, miles of hills, green with the spring verdure, stretching away south and west. Before us lay the Zab valley, and the whole view, north-east and south-west, was shut in by range upon range of high, steep mountains, the Zagros. We camped in the open that night upon a steep hill-side opposite a village. Some of the villagers had migrated to our camping-place to be near some growing corn, and were living in palisades which they had erected upon the summit of the ridge.

From here our road lay almost south to Sulaimania. We had come through the country of the Shuan Kurds, and we had no other course but to go down through the Hamavands to Sulaimania. By coming so far north we had turned the flank of the Bazian hills, and would now enter the valley that ran north-west and south-east from its upper end. This is the Hamavand country proper, one long narrow valley between precipitous hills, where no traveller dared venture, and of which even the odd foot-passengers who accompanied

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us had no knowledge, in spite of their ramblings all over the country. A poor man can of course go almost anywhere on foot without fear of molestation, for he neither excites the cupidity of the Kurds by possessions, nor their enmity by weapons. A thick stick and a dagger are his armoury.

Of this mixed collection, who carried all their belongings upon their backs, a very large number knew Persian, and delighted to air it whenever possible. They were all Kurds, from all parts, Sina, Sauj Bulak, Keui Sanjaq, and even Kermanshah, which is quite cut off from Sulaimania by very precipitous mountains and savage tribes.

Among them were two Aoramani, members of a tribe inhabiting the border mountain of Aoraman, a steep wall of rock nine thousand feet high, in whose valleys the Aoraman tribe lives. I was very anxious to learn something of them, for their own tradition assigns to them an origin in northern Persia; they speak a dialect not Kurdish, and now I saw that they possessed a physiognomy and manner also foreign to the Kurdish peoples. They both spoke modern Persian, and one was quite well read, reciting long stanzas of the Shah Nama, a Persian epic very popular among them. They would not admit a Kurdish origin, calling themselves "Farsan i kuhangahi," Persians of the olden time—and their language, which I afterwards learned, and saw written in several manuscripts, is certainly not a Kurdish dialect.

Our start that morning was delayed, for Shefiq Effendi, our leader, had caused some messengers to be sent to the first Hamavand village, with a letter from the resident Shuan chief, informing the tribe of Shefiq Effendi's arrival, and the displeasure that any raid upon him would arouse among the Shuan.

Notwithstanding this warning to them, and a guard of twenty Shuan horsemen who accompanied us as far as the brook marking the limit of their country, there seemed to be no certainty that we should not be attacked, for

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the soldiers were, after all, not in the same category as harmless passengers under Shuan protection, and it was feared that a body of Hamavand might descend, and cutting off the soldiers, fall upon them. Consequently mounted scouts from the escort were sent out on every side, particularly ahead, and the Kurdish horsemen displayed considerable skill in the way they galloped up narrow gullies to steep hill-tops, and keeping up with the caravan below, despite the detours they were often forced to make. Every member of the caravan wearing uniform was instructed to reverse his coat or cover it with an aba, or cloak, and conceal his fez in a Kurdish head-dress. The caravan itself was kept together, the soldiers marching in the middle of it!

For some hours we crept round the face of cliffs that debouch upon the Zab valley, and at last, turning away from the river, climbed through several beautiful valleys, enclosed by precipices, to a plateau. We were now in Hamavand country, and a keen-eyed scout descried a little body of horsemen some distance away. These kept parallel with our course, while one of their number went at full gallop in the direction our road would take us.

There is great danger among the tribes when two bodies of horse approach, for it is a custom to fire from the distance at the new arrivals, to ascertain whether they be friend or foe. In the former case they refrain from answering, and wait for the others to approach, which they will do either at full gallop, or taking cover behind hummocks. Within earshot, greetings are exchanged, and recognition takes place, by face, difference of dialect, or turban, when subsequent proceedings are determined.

For some hours we went thus, among the hills which succeeded the plateau, till we arrived at a valley where, upon the hill-side was a large village standing by a river. This is the village of the sedentary Hamavands, which, with its groves and gardens, is a pleasant sight.

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Upon the flat roofs the population was gathered; the richness of their clothing and the general idleness telling very plainly the triumphant story of two years successful rebellion and raids. From out this village another knot of horsemen appeared, but refrained from approaching, keeping to the opposite side of the valley.

Not wishing to rest so near the village, we kept on for some time till a turn of the hills hid us, and then in a depression by a basin where the grass grew knee-high, we threw the loads under some trees. Hardly had we done this than from every gully in the hill-sides horsemen came galloping down. Handsome men these Hamavands. As they rushed along, the silk head handkerchiefs of many colours streamed behind them; their long tunics, covering even their feet, rose and fell with the horses' action. The stirrups of many were inlaid with silver, contrasting with the scarlet upturned shoes. Their zouave jackets they had ornamented to the highest degree. Weird designs in gold braid and thread covered the pale blue cloth. Most were armed with Mauser repeating rifles, taken from the Turkish soldiers by force, and they made no pretence of hiding such evidences of their predatory predilections before the numerous soldiers and officers of our caravan.

Altogether there were about fifty of them, and notwithstanding the attitude of the soldiers, who had entrenched themselves behind bales, covering the oncomers, they rode straight up to the encampment, heedless of the disconcerted army that rose from behind its cover, looking foolish. As they approached near, each one ostentatiously opened the breech of his rifle and emptied it of cartridges, then slung it on his back, thereby announcing at once their friendly intentions, and their scorn for the soldiers. It was evident that the Shuan messengers had been well received, for the Hamavand head-man was there, a lad of about twenty, gorgeous in silk raiment, even to the undershirt, of which the long pointed sleeves hung to his feet. Remarkable, too, was the spotless cleanliness of these people. Despite

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their rough lives and constantly being in the saddle, not one showed a soiled shirt. Later, I discovered that the predatory Kurd, the more wealthy he becomes, insists ever more upon clean clothing—a feature peculiar, I should imagine, to the Kurd of these parts—not that the race can be called dirty, as the standards of Persia go.

The Hamavands, members of a race famous for bravery and lawlessness, have made a name for themselves among their countrymen, outdoing the wildest in foolhardy raids, and the bravest in their disregard of any danger, and a hostility to the Turks that has broken out continually ever since the powers of the old pashas of Sulaimania were broken. These years of outlawry seem to have had an effect upon their physiognomy. While not possessing the fine features of the Kurdish race, they have an alertness in their sharp dark eyes that comes of their mode of life, and a hostile manner that even among friends they cannot always control. We learned gradually, by the news that filtered from the tree where they were gathered round Shefiq Effendi, that they had received our messengers, and would see us as far as their chief's tent in Bazian plain, but we must take the chances of his decision. They could not guarantee that he would not resent the appearance of so many soldiers, nor be able to refrain from molesting them. It was suggested by the local chief that the soldiers should pack their arms upon mules and go back to Kirkuk, when we were assured that the chief would welcome us as followers of Shefiq Effendi. The Hamavands were very frank and very honourable. They refused to accept any food from the effendi, for they might be called upon to fall upon him and his soldiers that night; but after he had exempted them of all responsibility, they consented to partake of his tea.

However, they insisted upon certain conditions in the case of the soldiers. The bugle which had been used in the Shuan country was handed to the Hamavand leader, and one of his men at once tried to blow a call,

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a melancholy failure that provoked the sarcasm of his fellows, not only at him, but of the fools that had to be led by a braying brass pipe and could not understand the hill calls. The soldiers were to march wherever the riders directed, before or behind the caravan, and at night must camp where told, and be prepared to be shot at if they moved about at night. The conditions were of course agreed to, despite the disgust of the commanding "bimbashi," a Turk who had to have Kurdish translated, and who began to realise at last what Kurds might be.

These conditions arranged, a number of the troop left us to advise the chief, and taking a steep mountain path were soon out of sight. We loaded up slowly and resumed our way through some of the prettiest country I have ever seen in Kurdistan. Water and trees were abundant, valley after valley was carpeted with flowers and deep in grass. Sheep and cattle grazed in every place, guarded by small boys and girls, young Hamavands as yet not enlisted in the fighting forces—I include girls under this heading, for the women fight when necessary.

Towards sunset we topped a ridge and saw before us the long and narrow valley of Bazian, the centre of the Hamavand country. It is specially favoured with water, an abundance of which flows down from both sides. The two ranges appear to pour out all the moisture they possess upon the Bazian valley, for the plains that run up to their feet outside are waterless, and each range while presenting, upon their inward or Bazian faces, green, if steep slopes, show to the outer world precipitous faces of bare rock.

Consequently Bazian valley, for the whole of its narrow length—it is only two miles across—is a green field, wherein herds of sheep and cows, like our Guernsey breed, graze all the year round. The Hamavands had also an eye to self-defence in selecting this secluded spot, for, shut in at both north and south ends, its eastern and western walls have no break in them

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except the Bazian break in the western range, and a depression in the same range lower down at Sagirma. These two passes are admirably commanded from the steep spurs above them, and have never yet given way to an invading force.[1]

In a corner of the eastern range we came at sunset to a large black tent, the spring residence of the chief of the Hamavands, Hama Beg. From it emerged a number of men, who springing upon their horses came to meet us, and pilot us to our camping ground—for piloting was necessary. The leader of a tribe in rebellion must, even in his own country, be wary, and this chief had placed his tent in such a position that, while at his back was a precipice, on the other three sides a deep bog stretched, passable only by one narrow and slushy path. In the midst of this bog was the firm island upon which he lived and had allotted to us a camping place. The ground, to a stranger, appeared all firm, for a uniform covering of long grass stretched from the rocks' foot right across the plain.

Apparently the chief had decided upon letting us pass his country unmolested, for he came outside his tent and welcomed Shefiq Effendi cordially enough, leading him inside, where tea and nargila were produced.

Up to this point every one had been in a state of trepidation, for there was almost an even chance of being robbed and even slain. And this solely because of the soldiers, upon whom everybody looked with the loathing naturally to be displayed towards—not a single one—but a host, of Jonahs. These unfortunates, besides suffering from a most demoralising fear, were quite subdued, displaying none of the exuberant brutality usually typical of the creatures. Almost in silence they lay down on the damp ground allotted to them, nor objected when a dozen Hamavands formed a circle about them.

[1] In the opinion of the Sulaimania Kurds the word Bazian means in Kurdish "the place of defeats," but they have overlooked the fact that the word "bazi" and "bazian" is a common one in Kurdistan, with the significance "prominent hills."

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Despite the friendly attitude of the chief, he gave away none of his native caution; it is just possible that he suspected, or saw the possibility of treachery, for while we had a hundred soldiers, there were but thirty or forty of his men there. At any rate, horsemen kept appearing in twos and threes from every direction, unchallenged so long as it was light, but approaching warily, calling their mates by name, after sunset. By midnight there must have been a hundred and fifty men there, sitting wide awake around their chief's tent. Their horses, saddled, with bits removed, grazed near by, ready at any moment.

It was an understood thing that anyone standing up or moving about was liable to be shot at, and one incautious soldier, trusting to the moonless darkness, stood up and moved, and learned to his cost that Hamavands do not sleep when on guard, and moreover can make very close shooting in the dark.

I do not think many of us slept that night. The muleteers were in a terrible fright for fear the Hamavands should quietly lead their mules away and loose them upon the hills, where none but Hamavands could recover them. The soldiers feared sudden slaughter; and the passengers, looting.

Our hosts, too, were on the alert all night long; the glow of the cigarette ends and the grumble of talking went on, and at dawn it would seem that none had slept. It is a remarkable power that Kurds possess of night watching. Time after time I have seen men turn night into day thus, sitting by a fire all night almost motionless, but wide awake, ready for action, and by daybreak mount and ride thirty or forty miles and repeat the same proceeding. They seem almost tireless, possessing a power of endurance that continual danger has taught them. It is at any rate an achievement that makes the Kurd almost impossible to take by surprise in night attack.

The Hamavand tribe, which has brought all the arts of raiding and guerilla warfare to perfection, has a

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reputation of long standing for its daring and independence. Geographically speaking, they are not strictly within the borders of Kurdistan, but upon its western marches, and owing perhaps to the isolation of their country between its two ranges of hills, have kept aloof from all their neighbours for years.

They themselves claim Arab origin, a pretension not unusual among some of the smaller Kurdish tribes, and unsupported by any evidence for, and contradicted by much against, its possibility. For some years past they have allowed the Kurdish shaikh, or religious leaders, of the Qaradagh, their district, to attain a great ascendancy, and these have, by continual urging and exhortation, achieved their end of saddling the tribe with an iron-bound habit of religion quite foreign to the real Kurd of the mountains. Religious fervour, among Sunnis in particular, is inseparable from a great respect for Arabic language and lineage, with which the Sunni Turk and border Kurd almost invariably evinces a desire to identify himself; very much as Mr Smith or Mr Jones seek to prove a pure Norman descent which their names and antecedents do not necessarily indicate.

So we see Hamavand, Baba, Shuan, and Jaf, all claiming Arab descent for their leaders, while yet very proud of being Kurds to-day.

All these tribes are fond of indicating their dress, an adaptation of that of the Arabs, which they have adopted to the exclusion of the old and fantastic Kurdish dress, and point to it as being something to show their connection with the Arabs.

On the other hand, however, there are far more weighty evidences to prove that they are Kurd and nothing but Kurd, chief of which is their dialect, which is a well-defined and pure Kurdish tongue, the only Arab words in which have been imported. These words are usually the names of implements which, before the crafts of the Arabs were known to them, may not have existed.

From earliest memories of south-western Kurdistan

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