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John Scott

1860



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CHAPTER I.



FOUNTAIN NEAR ALEPPO.

CARAVAN PREPARING TO BREAK UP THEIR ENCAMPMENT.

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TRAVELS
IN
MESOPOTAMIA.

INCLUDING A

JOURNEY FROM ALEPPO TO BAGDAD,

BY THE ROUTE OF

BEER, ORFAH, DIARBEKR, MARDIN, & MOUSUL;

WITH RESEARCHES ON THE

RUINS OF NINEVEH, BABYLON,

AND OTHER ANCIENT CITIES.

James Silk
BY **J. S. BUCKINGHAM,**

AUTHOR OF TRAVELS IN PALESTINE AND THE COUNTRIES EAST OF THE JORDAN;
TRAVELS AMONG THE ARAB TRIBES; MEMBER OF THE LITERARY SOCIETIES
OF BOMBAY AND MADRAS, AND OF THE ASIATIC SOCIETY OF BENGAL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

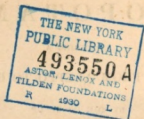
VOL. I.

LONDON:

HENRY COLBURN, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1827.

EW



LONDON :

PRINTED BY D. S. MAURICE, FENCHURCH STREET.

TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

LADY HESTER LUCY STANHOPE,

ONE OF THE BRIGHTEST ORNAMENTS OF HER SEX AND STATION,

THIS VOLUME OF TRAVELS IN MESOPOTAMIA,

PERFORMED SOON AFTER QUITTING HER HOSPITABLE RESIDENCE IN SYRIA,

IS GRATEFULLY DEDICATED, AS A MEMENTO OF THE HIGH RESPECT

AND UNAFFECTED ESTEEM

OF HER OBLIGED AND FAITHFUL FRIEND,

THE AUTHOR.

80X100

P R E F A C E.

IN laying before the world the present account of a Journey through Mesopotamia, I feel a stronger assurance of its being acceptable to the generality of readers, than I could venture to indulge on either of the two former occasions on which I had to present to the public eye the result of my researches and observations in other countries of the East. The "TRAVELS IN PALESTINE" appeared under the greatest disadvantages: notwithstanding which, their success, and the almost universal commendation they obtained, was as encouraging to future labours, as flattering in its

b

approbation of the past. The same unfavourable circumstances continued, when the "TRAVELS AMONG THE ARAB TRIBES" succeeded: but these also met with a reception so favourable, as to make me think more lightly of the obstacles which had hitherto impeded my progress than I had before felt justified in doing.

These disadvantages no longer exist. A severe and patient investigation, extended through nearly four years, into the accumulated and reiterated charges, by which the rivals as well as enemies of my reputation had endeavoured to impress the world with an opinion of my bad faith as an author, my worthlessness as a man, and my utter incompetency as a Traveller, either to observe accurately what I heard and saw, or to describe intelligibly even the ordinary objects of curiosity or interest, has led to the most satisfactory result. Two of the individuals who first dared to give utterance to these

aspersions, have, in a British Court of Justice, voluntarily confessed their falsehood, apologized for their misconduct, and submitted to verdicts being recorded against them; and the third has been convicted, before a crowded tribunal, and a jury of his countrymen, of being a false, scandalous, and malicious libeller, by a verdict which adjudged him to pay Four Hundred Pounds damages, and his full portion of the expenses of the legal proceedings, the whole of which, on the three actions tried, are understood to be upwards of Five Thousand Pounds sterling.

The details of the origin, progress, and termination of these trials, are given, for the satisfaction of the curious, in an APPENDIX at the end of the present volume. It is here thought sufficient, therefore, merely to record the fact, in order that the reader may be satisfied, before he enters on the perusal of the present Work, that its author, whatever may be his qualifications, is at least innocent of

the charges framed and propagated by his accusers, and is worthy of the faith and confidence of his fellow-countrymen, as to the originality and fidelity of his descriptions and details. For the rest, he cheerfully submits this portion of his labours, as he has always readily done every other, to the ordeal of Public Opinion, to be neglected, censured, or approved, as its defects or merits may determine.

The circumstances under which this Journey was entered upon and completed being fully explained in the Narrative itself, it is only necessary to premise, that it was performed without the pleasure, and advantage of a European friend, companion, interpreter, servant, or attendant of any sort; that the dress, manners, and language of the country, were adopted, and continued throughout the whole of the way; and that the utmost care was taken to ensure as much accuracy as was attainable, by recording all the observations

that suggested themselves while fresh on the memory, and amid the scenes and events which gave them birth.

It would scarcely be imagined, by those who have not taken the trouble to consult the authors whose accounts of this country exist, how scanty and imperfect is the information they collectively contain on the state and condition of Mesopotamia, even at the periods in which they wrote. Whether it was, that the difficulty of penetrating across its desert tracts, which has always been considerable, occupied all the attention of travellers in providing for their personal safety—or, that journeying as subjects of a different nation, and a different faith, they were unable to escape sufficiently from the observation of those around them, to record their researches without interruption—it is not easy to determine. Perhaps both of these causes may have operated to prevent their bringing away with them the ample details which it has been my good for-

tune to amass, respecting the interior of this interesting region, through which I travelled under all the advantages of respect and confidence from those around me, and with sufficient leisure and safety to enjoy unmolested opportunities of recording whatever appeared worthy of observation, before one series of impressions was obliterated by a succeeding train of objects and thoughts.

The principal Travellers who have made Mesopotamia the scene of their wanderings, have been the Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela, an enterprising Jew, who, as early as the year 1170 of the Christian era, visited many countries of the East, and wrote his observations in the Hebrew tongue, from which they have been subsequently translated into two of the languages of Europe; Dr. Leonhardt Rauwolff, a German, who went, by the Euphrates, from Bir to Babylon, and returned from Bagdad to Aleppo, by land, about the year 1530; Pietro Della Valle, an Italian, who was

in that country about 1620; Otter, a Frenchman, who travelled in 1730; and the celebrated Danish engineer, Niebuhr, about thirty years later. Since this last period, now nearly a century ago, there has been no Traveller of eminence, with whose works I am acquainted, who has had any opportunity of examining the country between the Euphrates and the Tigris, which strictly comprises the region of Mesopotamia; though many have passed from Constantinople, east of the latter river, through Georgia, Armenia, and Koordistan, to Bagdad and Persia.

I have reason to believe, therefore, that my account of Mesopotamia will be more ample than that of the Travellers named, as I have had an opportunity of consulting each of their works, and seeing the extent of their materials; and I am not without a hope, also, that it may be found as new and interesting, as it must be admitted to be copious and diffuse. On a country, however,

of which so little has been said by ancient travellers, and still less by modern ones, I considered that abundance, and even minuteness of detail, would be an error on the safe side; and, under this impression, I have permitted my observations, made on the way, to remain with little or no retrenchment: the opportunities of writing, which I enjoyed during this protracted journey, rendering it unnecessary to wait for further leisure, for the purpose of adding illustrations, or filling up the outline of the Narrative written on the spot. Such as the Journal of the Route was, therefore, on terminating the Journey at Bagdad, such is it now presented to the Reader; and if he should, from this state of the Narrative, be enabled to enter more readily into the views, and participate more freely in the feelings, of the writer, it cannot fail to increase the pleasure of both.

The Map of Mesopotamia, with a Sketch of

the Author's Route, has been constructed by Mr. Sidney Hall, from the original notes of bearings, distances, and time, recorded on the march; the Plan and Views of the existing Ruins of ancient Babylon are from the pencil of Mr. Rich, originally designed for his valuable and interesting Memoir, inserted in a Continental Work, under the direction of Baron von Hammer, entitled "Les Mines de l'Orient;" and the Illustrations at the Heads of Chapters, which embrace the most interesting of the many sketches taken on the journey, have been drawn on the wood by Mr W. H. Brooke, whose reputation, in this department of graphic productions, is fully maintained by his present labours, and engraved by the several individuals whose names are placed opposite the respective subjects on the list; while the peculiarly perfect manner in which the impressions are taken from the blocks, does much credit to the Printer.

Of the matter, style, and general literary

character of the Work, the Public will form their own estimate. It would be affectation in me to pretend, after the ordinary custom of the age, that I had been persuaded, by the earnest solicitations of indulgent friends, and in opposition to my own judgment, to give these materials to the world; and, on that ground, to deprecate criticism and seek shelter from scrutiny. I candidly confess, that I have been induced, by two more powerful considerations, to the execution of my task; first, the general approbation with which my former labours have been received; and secondly, the desire, which never forsakes me, of contributing—as far as my opportunities of observation, means of recording them, and capacity to render them intelligible, admit—my full share towards that accumulating stock of general instruction, which is now happily so largely drawn upon by all classes of the community, through which philanthropy and patriotism alike co-operate to encourage its diffusion. If this Offering, which I now lay

with pleasure, not unmixed with hope, on the Altar of Public Information, be acceptable to those who see, in the extension of Knowledge, the surest means of ameliorating the condition of mankind, I shall be abundantly rewarded.

J. S. BUCKINGHAM.

TAVISTOCK SQUARE,
FEBRUARY 5, 1827.

with pleasure, not unmixed with hope, on the Altar of Public Instruction, be acceptable to those who see, in the extension of Knowledge, the surest means of ameliorating the condition of mankind, I shall be abundantly rewarded.

J. S. BUCKINGHAM.

TAYLOR & BURNETT,
PRINTERS, 117 NASSAU ST.

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Public

TRAVELS
IN
MESOPOTAMIA.

CHAPTER I.

JOURNEY FROM ALEPPO TO THE BANKS OF
THE EUPHRATES.

AFTER a long and perilous journey from Egypt, through Palestine, Syria, and the untravelled countries East of the Jordan and Orontes, I enjoyed a repose of some days, in the city of Aleppo: from whence, however, I soon prepared again to depart for the equally interesting regions of Mesopotamia, on my progress to the farther East. The state of the city itself was, at this period, sufficiently tranquil; but the whole of the sur-

rounding country was in a state of turbulent commotion, so that travelling, either singly or in small parties, was impossible, without imminent risk of plunder, and perhaps destruction; and the difficulty of assembling sufficient numbers, to form a caravan of strength enough to force a passage through the Desert, was such as to leave little hope of that being accomplished till the return of more tranquil times. It was in the month of May, 1816, that hostilities had broken out between the Anazie Arabs, and another tribe, each belonging to the great division of this people which had embraced the new and reforming doctrines of the Wahābees, a sect of deistical puritans, who had, for some time past, disturbed the peace of Arabia, by their conversions and their wars. The immediate cause of this rupture was stated to be this: that one of the warm-blooded sons of Mahāanna, the great Chief of the Anazies, who assumed to himself the title of Sultan of the Desert, had stolen away, by force, from a neighbouring camp, a beautiful virgin, of whom, at first sight, as is not uncommon with Orientals, he had become passionately enamoured. This Trojan treachery had roused the whole of the sur-

rounding country to arms: and the most romantic tales of heroism, love, and self-devotion, with all the exaggerations which Eastern fancies give to such traits of character, were repeated by every tongue, and greedily drank in by every ear.

As a detail of preparations for a journey through rarely frequented countries is not only beneficial to those who may contemplate pursuing the same route at any future period, but instructive to all who desire to see the modes of thinking and the manners of acting, which prevail in distant countries, exhibited in the freshness of their original colouring; and to be transported, as it were, to the immediate scene, so as to become a co-spectator and a co-actor, as far as sympathy can effect this, with the Traveller himself, this detail will be given, and will serve at once to introduce to the reader's attention the characters in whose society, and the circumstances under which, the Journey about to be described was undertaken.

The great regular caravan from Aleppo to Bagdad, across the Syrian Desert, was not expected to leave the former city until September; but a smaller one had been formed,

for the purpose of going, by a more circuitous route, to Mardin, and Mousul on the Tigris. This caravan was, indeed, now on the point of departure. Mr. Vigoroux, a French gentleman, recently appointed consul for Bussorah, in the Persian Gulph, and whom I had seen some months before at Alexandria, in Egypt, had gone by the same way not more than ten days before my arrival at Aleppo; but accounts had already reached this, of certain arbitrary demands being made on him, as a Frank or European traveller, by the governors of the different stations on the road; and Mr. Barker, the British Consul at this city, spoke also of the route by Mardin and Mousul being extremely troublesome and vexatious on account of such exactions, of which he had heard much during his residence here.

My anxiety to enter upon the journey, and the faint prospect which presented itself of any better occasion, determined me, however, to accept this, whatever might be its disadvantages. I accordingly obtained an introduction to a merchant of Mousul, named Hadjee Abd-el-Rakhmân, who was returning by this caravan to his native city, with merchandize from the pilgrimage at Mecca. For

the respect which, as he said, he bore the English nation, from having always traded with them until the decline of their commerce at Aleppo, he consented to admit me into his party, the only condition exacted of me being, that I should conform myself, in every respect, to his advice and direction, and take no servant of my own to disturb the good understanding of his personal dependants. This was readily assented to, and it was stipulated, that I should furnish my horse and its trappings only, and for the rest, that I should be considered, in every respect, as one of the Hadjee's own family, as well for our general security from interruption on the road, as for my own comfort, which was likely to be much increased by my being placed on this familiar footing.

As it was thought that Hadjee Abd-el-Rakhmān was a person of too great respectability to accept for himself any sum of money, as a compensation for this favor, it was agreed between Mr. Barker the Consul, on my part, and the Hadjee's Factor at Aleppo, that I should give, before our departure, the sum of 150 piastres to the chief camel-driver of the Hadjee's party, who would put my small

portion of baggage among the merchandize of his master, to be free from examination and prying curiosity, so that I should have nothing but my horse to look after; and, on my safe arrival at Mousul, it would be sufficient to make some handsome acknowledgement to the Hadjee himself, proportionate to the service he might have rendered me, with a proper distribution of presents among such of his servants as had been attentive and useful to me on the way.

My dress and arms were like those of his nephew, Hadjee Abd-el-Ateef, a young man of twenty-five, who had accompanied his venerable uncle on the pilgrimage. The former consisted of the blue cloth sherwal, jubba, and benish, of the Arab costume; a large overhanging tarboosh, or red cap, falling over the neck and shoulders behind; a white muslin turban, and a red silk sash: the latter, of a Damascus sabre, a Turkish musket, small carbine, and pistols, with ammunition for each. The conveniences borne on my own horse were, a pipe and tobacco-bag, a metal drinking cup, a pocket-compass, memorandum books, and ink-stand, on one side of a pair of small khoordj, or Eastern travelling-bags; and on

the other, the maraboot, or chain-fastenings and irons for securing the horse, by spiking him at night to the earth, on plains where there are no shrubs or trees. A small Turkey carpet, which was to serve for bed, for table, and for prayers; and a woollen cloak for a coverlid during the cold nights, in which we should have to repose on the ground, without covering or shelter, were rolled up behind the seat of the saddle with straps; and my equipment, for any length of route, was thus thought to be complete. The supplies I had taken with me for the journey, included a bill of exchange for 6000 piastres (then about 100% sterling) on a merchant at Bagdad; and nearly 2000 piastres in small gold coin, which, with such papers as I considered of importance to me, I carried concealed in an inner girdle round my waist, called, by the people, a khummr, and generally used for this purpose, as it cannot be lost, or taken from a traveller, without his being absolutely stripped.

All my own arrangements being completed, I took leave of Mr. Barker's family about noon, and, accompanied by his son, and one of his native assistants, named Nahoom, we assembled, with the friends of Hadjee Abd-el-

Rakhmān, at a fountain on the public road, about a mile from Mr. Barker's country residence, in the environs of Aleppo. Having taken coffee here together, as a pledge of our future union, and watered our horses, we remounted and set out on our way. The friends of each party still accompanied us for a few miles on the road, when, at last, our final separation took place, with many warm and friendly adieus, and we now felt ourselves to be fairly on our journey.

Our route lay nearly north, along the eastern edge of the river of Aleppo, which ran on our left. The only appearance of verdure seen about its banks, is that created by the winding course of the stream itself, the borders of which are fringed with trees and gardens, very thickly planted. Beyond its immediate banks, the soil is dry, and the hills bare and stoney throughout the whole of the way to its source, which we reached about sun-set. Here several winding streams, all rising from the same spring, watered a small hollow plain in which a Turcoman horde was encamped.

The form and arrangement of the tents of these people, and the general aspect of the