

OUR FUTURE HIGHWAY



V. Roett Cameron

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KURDISH SHEPHERD.

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FUTURE HISTORY

VERNEY

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OUR FUTURE HIGHWAY.

BY

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(By Helena Cameron, from the Author's sketches.)

CHAPTER I.

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LIKE many of his followers Shaykh

Abed, chief of the Arab camp,

was a very favourable

specimen of the semi-

nomad. Indeed his people had only begun agriculture thirty years before, when they were forced to settle down at Mombedj by the Turkish Government as a guarantee for the

behaviour of the rest of the Aneizeh tribe, to which they claimed to belong. Most probably there was something behind this story, for all the Arabs look upon the purely nomad existence as the most gentlemanlike and aristocratic and despise agriculture; naturally, therefore, Shaykh Abed and his people liked to claim relationship with one of the greatest and most powerful of Arab clans, and to describe their agriculture as being only subsidiary to their pastoral pursuits.

They were still all living in tents of precisely the same pattern as the true nomads, and, though not making the great migrations which the latter do, occasionally changed their location to find more food or water for their flocks and herds, but always made the Momedj their head-quarters, and occupied the same place at seed-time and harvest.

When all was arranged, tents pitched and horses and mules stabled under the Shaykh's large tent, one side of which was open, we assembled there, round a fire, for the inevitable

coffee and talk. Shaykh Abed, who was a fine handsome man of about five and thirty, said he just remembered the settling down of his father at Mombedj, and that since that time all had gone well with them until the Circassians were told to take up their habitation there also. Whilst he was speaking about this some Circassians came strolling in and had to be invited to sit down and join in the coffee-drinking ; this prevented for the time any further confidences. The conversation changed from the Circassians to shooting and hunting, and the 'Shaykh, who possessed a brace of very handsome black and white greyhounds, said that if we would stop the next day he would go out with us after gazelle, when we could take our own dogs as well as his and some others that were in the camp. The Circassians said that their headman wanted very much to see us, and we therefore told them that if he would send to us in the morning and say whether he would come to us or we should go to see him we should be

glad to have a talk with him. When the Circassians went away the Shaykh said that he would come into our tent and tell us all about his grievances, as people would be always coming and going in his large one so that we could not talk quietly there. We accordingly moved over with two or three men who were more in his confidence than the rest, and he opened his mind very fully.

Before the Circassians had come to Mombedj he had received a message that the Sultan wished them to settle there, and that as they were Mohammedans who had been driven out of their homes by the common enemy he hoped they would be kindly received. They were to be allowed to build a village in the ruins, and to pasture their cattle near, and also to cultivate ground, but were not to interfere with any that was already cultivated by the Arabs. He replied that they should be welcome, and that he and his people would assist them to the best of his power. The Circassians — when they arrived — were not

content with the land given them to cultivate, and tried to take that of the Arabs; and when the latter objected broke their ploughs and drove them, and prevented them cultivating any land at all. An officer, Yuzbashi Erat, had been named to settle and arrange all disputes between the Arabs and Circassians, but seemed to have neglected his duty wofully. He had left the place soon after the Circassians arrived, and when the Arabs sent in to him at Aleppo, had promised to come out directly after *Bairam*. More than six weeks had elapsed since then, and though the Arabs had sent many messages to him and a petition to the Wali imploring his presence, no notice had been taken of their appeals. The Circassians, through impunity in evil-doing, were growing bolder, and now were constantly stealing cattle and sheep, and had even set upon women and children collecting brushwood for firing, and beaten and robbed them. Shaykh Abed said that this state of affairs could go on no longer, and

that when we arrived he had been on the point of starting for Aleppo himself to see if his own presence would have any influence on the Wali; if that failed his intention was to seek assistance from other Arabs and his relations in the desert and drive the Circassians away by force. The superior arms of the latter had hitherto prevented the Arabs from taking the law into their own hands, but, as the Shaykh said, matters were becoming unbearable, and that, though the Circassians were the better armed, numbers would be on the side of the Arabs, and even if they did lose many men it would be better than putting up with matters as they stood then.

We strongly urged him not to resort to force, as it would put him and his people in the wrong, and that even if they did overcome the Circassians there were enough soldiers at Aleppo to put him and all he could bring down easily; in which case, instead of being rich and prosperous, they would be reduced to pauperism, as the troops would be sure to

take all their cattle and sheep away from them, so that they would have to depend entirely on the land for their support, while the Circassians, instead of being merely unpleasant neighbours, would develop into tyrannical masters.

Our advice was that he should represent his case to the consular body at Aleppo and pray for their intervention, and we promised to write to Henderson on the subject and inclose a statement drawn up by himself and his principal men as to the causes of their dissatisfaction with the Circassians. This letter he could send in at once to Aleppo; and we promised that if Henderson should meet us at Jerablus, as he had promised to do if possible, we would send over a messenger to let him know, so that he might have a personal interview with him.

Our consultation being over, we ordered supper to be brought, and asked the Shaykh to join; he said he had also had supper cooked for us, and proposed, as a compromise, that we should eat ours first and then send for

his and eat that. We first had ours served in European fashion, with a table and seats. The Shaykh and one of his friends who stayed with him managed very fairly with knives and forks, though they had never seen them used before, and as we afterwards heard they could not make out the reason why we wanted spiked things to put our food in our mouths when fingers were so much more handy. When our supper was done the table was cleared away and the Shaykh's produced, when we had to squat down on the ground and conform to the Arab manner of eating, the Shaykh arguing, plausibly enough, that as we had made him eat like a European it was only fair that we should now eat like Arabs.

After this double-barrelled supper we went back to the Shaykh's large tent, in the centre of which was a fire of brushwood and where a number of his people were assembled. The coffee-maker, who occupied the principal place in the circle, was an adept in his art, roasting the berries to the exact point required, then

pounding them in his mortar with a sort of rythmical cadence of the blows of the pestle, occasionally allowing some aspiring youth to imitate his performance, but always being dissatisfied and resuming the duty himself. The coffee being pounded, he paid the greatest attention to boiling the water, putting in the coffee and pouring it from pot to pot, ere it was pronounced fit for use ; then a delicate rinse of the cups with the smallest possible drop of the precious fluid ; and at last, having first tasted the brew himself, the exactitude with which he poured it into the tiny cups out of which it was to be drunk ; all these were done with the precision and grace of a master of the art.

The coffee, when made, certainly repaid the pains bestowed on its making, and the services of the artist were in demand during the whole evening. A curious party it seemed, all squatting and sprawling about on carpets and cushions, the Shaykh and ourselves in the centre, and conversation about all things, from sport to war ; questions about railways,

telegraphs, English horses, dogs, guns, houses ; how it was possible to live in a country where there was no sun ; in fact all sorts of questions both absurd and sensible, ranging from the wildest vagaries of "the thousand and one nights" to the most prosaic details of the nineteenth century. All were eager to know about Africa, and were delighted to hear that Arabs were the most adventurous and successful of merchants in the *Barr-el-Soudan*, and that I had lived with and made friends with Arabs in those far-distant lands. They could hardly, however, understand how Arabs managed to exist in a country where they had neither camels nor horses, and protested that they would prefer to remain poor in their own land to get rich in one where they would have to make painful journeys on foot. Our tobacco pouches were freely indented on by our friends, as the tobacco they grew for themselves or bought in small towns or villages was not so good in their opinion as ours, which we had brought from Aleppo.

The scene was very beautiful; out in the clear cold moonlight stood our white tent glistening in the rays, flocks of sheep and herds of cattle clustering round the black tents of their owners, and in the centre the circle of Arabs in their picturesque dresses, the hanging *kofia* or handkerchief which they wear on their heads heightening the wild look of their features, alternately in brilliant light or deep shade as the fire blazed up when fresh brush-wood was added, and then died down again to a mere heap of mouldering embers.

It was nearly midnight ere we broke up, and the sounds of revelry continued some time longer in another tent where our servants and muleteers had been making merry with some of the Arabs. Songs and dancing had been going on uninterruptedly ever since eight o'clock, and had not ceased when we went to sleep. Although Arab music is very different from the European idea of harmony, and in a house or room is abominable to most civilised ears; still here, in "tented fields," the wild

choruses seem to have a spirit and a swing, and are not destitute of a rude harmony which is particularly appropriate to the surroundings.

The Shaykh, true to his word, had his horses and dogs ready in the morning, and after an early breakfast we went out to look for gazelle. We had not been long away before we saw a herd of nearly forty, and got up to within about fifty yards before they saw us; we slipped the dogs, six in all, as they started; but it was a case of an *embarras de richesses*, as the greyhounds were confused and kept on changing. However we had a delightful gallop, and scattered the herd into small groups of three and four each. After half-an-hour of galloping we pulled up to collect the dogs again, and I got off to let my horse Sultan have a rest, as he had been hard worked the day before. Whilst I was standing by his side two gazelle came over the crest of a hill close by, and away swept the Arabs and dogs after them; as I tried to mount the saddle turned round, and Sultan

was so excited that it was ten minutes ere I could girth it up again and remount. He seemed to enjoy the fun just as much as any of us, and when we had another run shortly afterwards, passed the whole field, though the Shaykh did his utmost to hold his own on his favourite mare.

We had no kill, though several gazelle had shaved, and after a bit the greyhounds got so beat that it was no use going on. Indeed it is very rare indeed that a greyhound can run down a gazelle unless he can get within twenty yards or so before he is slipped, and at this season of the year, January, when the gazelle are in good condition for going, the only chance the dogs have is after heavy rain, when the small feet of the gazelle sink into the mud, and they can get no resistance to spring from.

When we got back to the tents Schaefer went out shooting, and I lent my gun to Elias the cook to shoot for the pot, whilst I rode over on Count to have a look at the ruins and to

see why the Circassians had not sent over to arrange about their headman's visit.

The ruins of Hierapolis are clearly visible, parts of the walls still standing, and in some places being nearly forty feet high; lines of streets may be traced, as also of aqueducts, and small reservoirs may be seen, besides the large one into which the subterranean canal discharges its waters. The stone of which it was built is a yellowish fossiliferous limestone, the same stone as is used in Aleppo at the present day; and though there were not any great architectural remains there was enough to prove that in ancient days it had been a prosperous and well-built town. Two small mosques mark the burial-places of some Mohammedan santons, and the Circassians had raised the ire of the Arabs by violating these; as, although not fanatical or austere in their religion, indeed very often so lax as to neglect prayers and rites altogether, the Arabs pay a great respect to the memory of the dead, and could not understand the Circassians, who were

said to be of the same religion as themselves, desecrating spots which they held in veneration.

Hierapolis is famous as the point where Julian the Apostate collected the armies which he destined to overturn the empire of Sapor, the representative of Sassanian monarchy. It possessed at one time a magnificent temple, whose rich endowments supported three hundred priests in ease and luxury. The term "*Ninus vetus*" used by Ammianus seems to give some authenticity to an idea that it was once a seat of the Assyrian monarchy, and perhaps had somewhat to do with its identification with Karchemish, which has been upset by Mr. Smith's discoveries.

Now all that is to be seen are the ruins and the square huts of the Circassians, into whose village I rode after having been round the ruins ; I tried in vain to find any one who could, or would, understand me, and my search for their chief or the man whom I had seen the previous evening was equally futile, so that I was obliged

to come away without hearing their side of the story in their disputes with the Arabs.¹

Disappointed in this I rode back to our tent, where I found Schaefer had had very good sport, having shot several snipe and teal, whilst Elias, by crafty and pot-hunting tactics, had secured five kettah for two cartridges.

△ The rest of the afternoon passed away in a medical *levée*, and if I was not able to relieve all who applied to me, I was able favourably to impress others by the power of my remedies. Ophthalmia was very prevalent, and I had to treat both children in arms and toothless old greybeards for it. The favourite remedy of the Arabs for ophthalmia is pounded sugar-candy, which they call English sugar, distinguishing it from Zuka-al-Mesr, or Egyptian sugar, which they only use for eating, and of which they are

¹ Some time afterwards I heard from Henderson that Shaykh Abed had been in to see him at Aleppo, and that things had been going on from bad to worse until they had culminated in the Circassians murdering an Arab. Henderson had taken up the cause of the Arabs, and was in hopes that the Circassians would be removed from the neighbourhood of Mombedj.

inordinately fond. I was prayed to restore the paralytic to health, to remove the blame of sterility from women, and if I had no medicines which would have the desired effect, to write charms which they might wear, and which would by time and faith bring about the wished-for result.

Our evening passed in much the same way as the previous one, and it was again late before we got to bed. One feature in the night's entertainment was a huge bonfire in the open space in front of the Shaykh's tent, around which there was a great dance and song, between fifty and sixty men joining in it; it was a weird performance, and both to eye and ear a very impressive one.

Next morning we sent on our mules as soon as they were loaded, and stopped to have a final talk with the Shaykh. Just before we started he expressed a wish to be allowed to fire off my Winchester, which he had been attentively examining. I let him do so, and then he wanted to see me fire at something, so after

a bit we selected a large white stone about a hundred and fifty yards off, at which I fired the whole twelve cartridges as fast as I could, and luckily did not miss once. The Shaykh then tried, but could not manage it at all, the only weapon he was acquainted with being the lance. With many warm good-byes, and amidst invitations to return and stay with him for as long as we chose, and whenever we chose, we at last parted from the Shaykh, and rode on after our caravan.

As we were riding along we kept on flushing snipe and duck from a stream that ran close by the track, and I determined when we got up to the animals to let my horse be led, and walk along the bank with my fowling-piece, and try for a mixed bag, nor was I disappointed.

Walking close to the stream, I was constantly getting shots at snipe and teal, and occasionally at big duck of varying kinds; and in one place I had a great piece of good fortune. I saw some large duck swimming on an open piece

in the stream, and tried to get up to them for a shot. Before I could get near enough to fire they got up and skirred across a rise which hid the next bend of the stream from us. Growling at my luck, I crept up the near side of the slope, and not only saw my ducks, but also a swan. The latter was standing, wrapt in meditation, about a hundred yards from the nearest place where I could get under cover. I slowly and stealthily went back till I could stand upright, and then signing to the caravan to remain still and quiet, I rushed to my horse and took the Winchester from the saddle. I then retraced my steps, and was all anxiety as I reached the slope to know if when I was able to peer over again the swan would still be there. As I gently raised my head, I again saw him, but he had shifted his position somewhat, which made approaching him more difficult than it was before, but by creeping on hands and knees along an irrigation cut, and taking advantage of sedges and grasses growing on its edge, I was able to get to within

about ninety yards. I raised myself, cautiously, put the hammer to full cock gently, so as not to make a click, took a steady aim and pressed the trigger: snap went the striker on the cartridge, but no report; the cartridge had missed fire. To bring the next into action was the work of a second, but my beautiful bird was alarmed, and was twisting about, flapping his wings, and hopping away just as if he was going to take flight. Whether to fire at him on the move, or to wait on the chance of his stopping again, was difficult to decide. I luckily kept as still as a stock or a stone, and he settled down quietly about fifteen yards further away. Again I drew a bead on him and pressed the trigger: was it to be another miss-fire or not? Hurrah! there was a bang and a kick, and the swan rolling over in his death agony. I rushed out after him, getting up to my middle in mud and slime; but it did not matter, I had got him, and bore him back in triumph to Elias, into whose charge I consigned him. Besides the wild-fowl I also got some kettah and francolin, and altogether

in about three hours' tramp got somewhere about forty head of mixed game—a very good day's wild sport, the bag varying in size from a snipe to a swan.

At last we came to the Nahr Sadschur, into which the stream we had been following fell, and which the path to Jerablus crossed. Here I washed off the mud and dirt with which I was covered, and got on my horse again. We now began to go over bleak hill sides covered with small brush which much reminded one of heather on the Scottish mountains, and here the kettah were packed in enormous quantities. Neither Schaefer nor I cared much to go after them, as we had still a good distance to go, and our gamebag was sufficiently full to supply our commissariat for some days. After some time the tracks diverged, and there was a dispute between the muleteers and Mohammed, the zaptieh, as to which was the right way; some shepherds whom we appealed to differed as to which line we should follow, so I determined to

trust to myself. Knowing that the Euphrates must be in sight from some hills on our right, I rode off to the top of the highest to see if I could pick up any points near Jerablus which I might recognise. On arriving there I saw the river and the hills opposite Jerablus, so rode down, waving to the caravan to come to me. In a short time an intervening hill hid them from my sight, and when I struck the line down which I intended them to come, I got off, and knee-haltering my horse, sat down for a smoke. After waiting some time, Daher and one of the servants came down, saying that a man had told Schaefer the right road, and that he and the caravan were following it. I was not inclined to go back, so told the two and Gabriel, who also came up a few minutes after, to come with me along the line I had chosen. We soon got into a sort of ravine leading down between two hills to the plain of the river. In this ravine was a large Arab encampment, and on a piece of level

ground at its mouth all the young men and boys were playing hockey. Once on the plain we rode along under the shadow of the cliffs which divide the hilly from the level portion. These cliffs are soft limestone and numberless caverns are cut in their faces. Some of these are now inaccessible, others are partly fallen in; but a good number are inhabited by the poorer Arabs, who with their cattle find a warm and dry shelter in these ancient caves. Besides these troglodytes, pigeons and martens innumerable had their nest in the cliffs, and I could not resist the temptation of potting a couple of "blue rocks" with my carbine as they were sitting on the top of the cliffs sunning themselves in the evening sun. Though the accuracy of the carbine was proved the poor birds were uselessly sacrificed, as the bullets had smashed them up so much that they were unfit for food. As we came out from under the shadow of the cliffs and the plain widened out we could just see Jerablus in the distance,

and at the same moment firing from the caravan drew my attention to it emerging from a valley in the hills.

I galloped across to them and pointed out Jerablus, so that they might steer straight for it. Though in sight of Jerablus at sunset, it was not reached till nearly two hours later, as darkness closing in on us compelled us to pick our way carefully for fear of holes made by jerboa rats and the rootings of wild pigs.

When we did arrive, everybody turned out to welcome us, and Shaykh Hosayn put the same house at our disposal that I had occupied on our previous visit. This we now made into stable and kitchen, and pitched our tents for our own lodging.

Raschid made his appearance with a glowing report of how he had been working and how much he had done, but we were all tired, and deferred business and conversation to the morning.

CHAPTER II.

More hieroglyphics—Assyrian fashion—No luck—An excuse—Vague complaints—Hajji Schalbach—Tithes—*Corvée*—A challenge—Not to be found—A *bapor*—Wound a pig—Shaykhs Mohammed and Murad—Seglawi mare—Unwieldy craft—Real Arabs—Stock getting low—More efficient supervision—The race—Take his cloak—Laughter—Visit to Ras Ali—Neatly arrange—Prisoners of war—Three piastres—Patriotism—More sick—The duties of a doctor—A nasty day—Not sorry—Castle of Bir-ed-jik—No boats plying—A nondescript craft—A Blackwall clipper—A hugh paddle—Contortions and evolutions—No cook and no beds—Our predicament—A jolly old gentleman—We wax friendly—A telegram—Horses stabled—Our sleeping sacks—Close quarters—Turkish bath—An acquaintance—Small necessaries.

IN the morning when we had got matters settled I sent for Raschid in order to find out how he had been getting on with the digging. Very well indeed, was his answer; but on further inquiry I found that only three and

a half days' work had been done since I left nearly three weeks before. Some more stones with hieroglyphics on them had been found near the two large bas-reliefs, and between the latter was a flight of steps.

Next morning we first went over to the ruins and set the people to work again. The bas-relief which had not been broken had two figures of men standing on a crouching lion, the hinder one of whom carried an axe, and the other two large feather fans, their hair and beards being arranged something after the Assyrian fashion. The steps were broad and shallow, and the stones with the hieroglyphics on them seemed to have formed the sides of the entrance into whatever place the steps led ; below the bas-reliefs was a foundation of large rough stones, and it seemed as if during the existence of the more modern town the building of which these stones formed part had been partially thrown down and other edifices erected above the remains.

The men being once more fairly at work, we

went on to the islands to look for pig, but had no luck, although we went up the river to the island where I had turned out fourteen, and rode through and through the scrub in which they had been lying on the previous occasion. Enormous flocks of starlings were roosting on small trees which grew in places on the face of the bank of the river, and numbers of pelicans and other water-fowl were swimming on its breast as we rode back in the evening.

Raschid made an excuse for not having worked more during my absence, saying that Shaykh Hosayn had interfered with him. When we sent for the Shaykh about this he said that the Kaimacan at Bir-ed-jik had sent down to know why he had permitted the digging to go on, and whether he was to be paid anything for it. The Shaykh said he had been paid nothing, and thought the message of the Kaimacan a good opportunity to try and get something out of us. He had a friend called Hajji Schalbach, a merchant at Bir-ed-jik, stopping with him, who chimed in vague

complaints against the Kaimacan, but when we urged both to give us some definite idea of what the acts of which they complained were, they declined, saying that if anything were done to the Kaimacan in consequence of their complaints, and it was known that they had furnished information, the successors of the present man would, even if he were impotent, cause them great annoyance and trouble for having dared to report the doings of an official. Hajji Schalbach was a large proprietor, owning several villages near Bir-ed-jik, and was strongly in favour of commuting the tithes for a fixed money payment, as under the present system more loss is caused to the owners by the grain not being garnered until measured by the tithe collector than the amount of the tithe itself. The *corvée*, he said, fell heavily on his peasantry, at which old Hosayn laughed, and said that the government knew better than to attempt to come out to his and the surrounding villages to get men for *corvée*, as they would be driven away, but that their camels

and mules were often taken when they were in towns, and that months often passed without his knowing where the animals were.

Both Shaykh Hosayn and the Hajji had supper with us and sat up long after talking and smoking, and the Shaykh, waxing bold as the evening went on, challenged me to a race for a pound: I was to ride Sultan, and he his mare. This challenge I accepted at once for the fun of the thing, and it was arranged to come off next morning.

Soon after we were up in the morning Shaykh Mohammed and a friend of his, Shaykh Murad, came over to see us, and promised to stop and see the race, and afterwards have luncheon with us. When I sent for Shaykh Hosayn to arrange about the distance and direction in which we were to ride, he was not to be found, having started before daylight with his friend Schalbach for Bir-ed-jik.

After visiting the ruins we followed the advice of Daher, that "*Massu allaient autre voyage en Bapor,*" which being interpreted meant that we

should send some men across to the other side of the river to drive the pigs out of their lairs in some valleys and ravines there, and make them come over to our side. After a little bother we got half-a-dozen to go in a primitive ferry-boat fashioned something like an over-grown packing-case with sloping ends, and they did manage to drive one pig across. Schaefer wounded him soon after he landed on our side, and then he swam to another island which was on the other side of an unfordable branch of the stream, where he lay down close to some cattle, so that we did not dare to fire at him. Neither the herdsmen who were looking after the cattle nor the men we had sent to drive the pigs would understand our shouts and signals to send him back towards us, and there he lay for over an hour, and we had to go back to our tent to entertain Shaykhs Mohammed and Murad. Elias had prepared an Arab meal, and we all squatted down in company; whilst we were eating who should appear but Shaykh Hosayn, who had just returned from starting

his friend for Bir-ed-jik; and who was nothing loth to join in when invited.

We all chaffed him very much about having challenged me to ride a race and then going away without leaving any word about it; after a time he promised to ride the next morning, and the course was to be from the village to the ruins. Shaykh Mohammed said he would come over again to see the fun, and would send a young mare of the Seglawi breed to join in, but that as it was only to try her he would not put any money on.

After luncheon was over we went to look after our friend the wounded pig, but he had gone; however, we turned up three which were lying in the bush, and wounded one. As usual, he went straight for the river and tried to swim back to the other side; we kept up a hot fire on him as he was swimming, and one bullet striking him in the head finished his mortal career. The *Massus* who were coming back in the *Bapor* (*bateau-à-vapeur* is, I suppose, the derivation of the last word) tried to get his carcass, but they

couldn't manage it, owing to the unwieldiness of their craft.

Shaykh Mohammed wanted us very much to go and stay at his village, where he said we should be among real Arabs, and would not have to pay for anything however long we might choose to stop; whilst Shaykh Hosayn was half a Kurd or a Turk, and would make us pay for the use of his house, and for every egg, fowl, or grain of barley that we wanted. We could not very well comply with his request, so we compromised matters by promising to go over the next day and have dinner with him at two or three o'clock in the afternoon.

Schaefer and I knowing how tobacco usually went in these sort of visits, were rather loth to go, as our stock was getting low, and we were still bound to wait for a day or so more on the chance of Henderson turning up.

Some small pieces of broken stones and a fragment or two of glass were found to-day at the ruins, where we were only keeping a small

number of men at work, as the money for paying them had to be husbanded, and more efficient supervision could be kept up over a small than over a large number of workmen.

In the morning I got hold of Shaykh Hosayn, who at first said he was not well, and could not ride, and then that he would not ride for money. Shaykh Mohammed, who came up at this time, said he had heard him promise to ride for a pound, and that he would be eternally disgraced if he hauled off. He at last consented to start for the race, but would not promise about the money. It was all over with him and his mare in less than two hundred yards, but Shaykh Mohammed's mare was waiting for me half way to the ruins, so I went on to try her. About a hundred yards before I got up, the man who was riding her set her going, and it was five or six hundred yards more before I could pass her. Sultan seemed thoroughly to enjoy the fun, and was not a bit distressed by a two-mile gallop. Schaefer, who had been marking the point for the winning-

post, now rode back with me, and agreed that if Shaykh Hosayn said he would not pay the pound, I should chase him if he was still on his horse, and get his cloak or *kofia* from him. He and Shaykh Mohammed came to meet us, and Shaykh Hosayn began to chaff and laugh, saying that he had never intended that we should ride a race. I appealed to Shaykh Mohammed, and said that if I was not paid I should have the cloak off Hosayn's back, but that he might ride for it. Old Hosayn thought at first I meant nothing; but at last I got him to start, and although he managed to twist and turn pretty well, I soon got hold of his cloak, but it was too well tied on to pull it off without tearing something; so, letting go of his cloak, I put my arm round his waist, and before he well knew where he was, had him across my saddle. Everybody was shouting with laughter, in which the old Shaykh himself joined, when I pulled up and let him down to the ground, after telling him that both he and his cloak now belonged to me.

This little lark being over, we went again to the ruins, where they were still digging near the bas-reliefs in line with the directions in which they ran, to see if anything could be found of the room or temple, the entrance of which they had adorned. When this was done it was time for us to go over to Ras Ali, to lunch with Shaykh Mohammed. We soon reached there and were welcomed into his tent, the reception part of which was divided from the women's quarters by a screen of reeds fastened together by coloured worsted worked into a pattern. All round were spread Persian and Kurdish carpets, and silken cushions were provided for us to lean upon. Our riding-boots being rather in the way when squatting on the ground, the Shaykh had them pulled off, and then coffee and pipes were produced. We had brought all our remaining stock of tobacco with us, but when we produced it the Shaykh and man who seemed to be his first lieutenant, would not hear of our using our own tobacco when on a visit to him, and filled our

pipes for us themselves ; the only thing which they consented to, was that we should make a temporary exchange of pipes. After some time, during which we smoked and were plied with alternate cups of tea and coffee, food was brought in, Shaykh Mohammed who was a great dandy, did not have his bread, as was usually the case, shied down anyhow round the edges of the carpet on which the dishes were arranged, but it was neatly folded and arranged in a sort of pattern. We had pillau of rice and fowls, cheese, onions, honey, and stewed figs, all well cooked and clean. Amongst the guests was a full-blooded negro, who with one of the Arabs had been a prisoner of war, and had lately been released. They passed five months altogether with the Russians, and said they had not at all enjoyed the time ; they used to be made to work, and if they refused were beaten with sticks. Their food was coarse and insufficient as a rule, but one day when some Englishmen were brought by Russian officers to see them, they had a red-letter day. When they were

freed at the termination of the war, the Russians gave each man three piastres, and on arriving in the Turkish lines they found no preparation made for them. The greater part of the prisoners were incorporated in some Turkish regiments, which were on the spot when they arrived, but these two and some twenty others were sent to Constantinople, whence our friends had made their way by begging to their own homes, which they never wished to leave again for the purpose of fighting. The Shaykh upbraided them with want of patriotism, and said if it were not that he was married, and had to support his wives and children and his old mother he would have volunteered for the war himself.

Soon after sunset we returned to Jerablus, and for once in a way got to bed in decent time. Next day we had a *levée* of all the sick for some miles round, and where we thought we could do any good distributed medicines and ointments to the applicants. Others who were beyond our skill we

recommended to go in to the European doctors at Aleppo, but they did not seem to relish the prospect of having to pay to be cured; the general idea seeming to be that the doctor should not only prescribe and provide medicines, but that he should also feed and lodge his patients whilst under his care, and all without making any charge.

No news arriving about Henderson, we gave up all hopes of seeing him, and decided to wait no longer, but to start the next morning. When the morning arrived it was a nasty, cold, drizzly day, almost freezing, and our people were very dilatory in packing, trusting to something occurring to make us delay our departure another day. Notwithstanding the bad weather Shaykhs Mohammed and Murad and many of their people came over to wish us good-bye, and at last, at a quarter before eleven, we managed to make a start.

As we went along the rain gradually ceased, but was succeeded by a bitter cold wind from the north-east. We saw a few hares, but the

weather was too wretched to do any coursing, and we were not sorry when at half-past two we came to a khan where we were able to get some hot coffee and bread, and warm ourselves round a blazing fire. Nearly all the people belonging to the village round the khan were away attending a marriage feast at a place a few miles off. The two or three who remained to look after the place were busy stripping the fibrous sheath off large reeds; this after being dressed they make into rope; the reeds when stripped were thrown on the fire and made a cheerful blaze.

Soon after we left the khan we could see the trees in the gardens around Bir-ed-jik, and shortly afterwards we could distinguish the castle, which is built of a very light reddish-yellow limestone; the houses, being all of chalk, and built against a very steep chalk hill, we could not distinguish till long after. As we got nearer the town we saw some men with greyhounds stalking a few gazelle, amongst which was a black one, but they were some distance

from our road, and it was necessary to press on if we were to reach the ferry in time to get across to Bir-ed-jik that same evening.

At last we arrived on an expanse of level ground which is covered by the river during the spring floods, and cantered on to try to get boats ready by the time the mules should arrive. When we got opposite the town all the boats had ceased plying, and the wind was blowing furiously from the eastern shore so that our shouting and firing of guns was for a long time unnoticed. After some time we attracted attention, and one of the nondescript craft put off and came lumbering across the river.

Noah's ark must have been a Blackwall clipper when compared with the machine that was making its painful way towards us. She was built of rough planks with clumsy ribs, caulked with cotton and paid with bitumen. Her floors were quite flat, and the sides stood up at right angles to them; the bow, or rather the part that went first curved up slightly and

was quite open. The stern ran up into a high peak, on which was pivoted a huge paddle made of rough branches rudely joined together; at the outer end a piece of plank was nailed on and a large stone lashed on the inner one to act as a counterpoise. On a sort of platform stood the skipper and his mate, who used



FERREY BJAT.

this paddle to direct the course, and at intervals worked a pole to propel their vessel forwards; at the bow three men laboured, as with an oar, at a pole destitute of any blade, going through contortions and evolutions which would have driven any rowing men frantic. This oar was worked on the downstream side of the boat so

as to assist in keeping her head up. Of course when they fetched our side they had drifted a long way down and the crew had to get out and track her up. The open bow just laid on the bank, and we got our horses and some of the mules, which had come up, on board and started across. By the time we arrived at the Eastern bank it had got quite dark and the chief of the boatmen said it was against orders for boats to cross the river at night. There we were, a bitter cold wind blowing, sleet falling, and no cook, and no beds. We managed to get some coffee, and shelter our horses in a café, but could find no lodging for ourselves.

When we asked where the Kaimacan lived we had great difficulty in getting any one to show the way, as it was said to be too late to disturb him. At last Mohammed, the zaptieh, lit upon a corporal, and we sent Gabriel off with them to see the Kaimacan and explain our predicament. Gabriel returned in about half an hour with two soldiers who had been

ordered to get boats to go across for our people. They were unable to get any one to go, and after three quarters of an hour of wrangling and fighting between them and the boatman we thought it best to go and see the Kaimacan ourselves.

We found a jolly-looking old gentleman sitting in a small room with a couple of friends. The greater part of the room was taken up by a stove and divans, chairs and cupboards, whilst on the wall hung a double barrellled breech-loader and a game bag.

We apologised for troubling him, but he said we were quite right, and sent off one of his companions to see about the boats and for a khan-keeper to arrange about our lodgings for the night. Our conversation was limited, as he only spoke Turkish and a very few words of French. However, we managed to get on very well, and as we waxed friendly he said he had something better than coffee for us to drink, and out of the game bag came a flask full of raki and from a cupboard was produced a bottle

—by the side of which a Jeroboam would have been a baby—full of Bir-ed-jik wine.

The old gentleman was jerkily polite, and kept hopping about and chirruping like a canary. Whilst we were there a telegram was brought in, and he first hopped for his seal and ink to stamp the receipt, then for his spectacles, and then for a candle to read it by, all the time saying, "*Télégramme*, ha, ha! *Télégramme*, ho, ho! *Télégramme*, hi, hi!" as if receiving a telegram was the best fun in the world. After some little stay with him we went away, and found the boats gone, and that Mohammed had gone with them; so we saw our horses stabled and fed in the café, and went up to the khan, where we found an unfortunate beggar being turned out of a square cell-like room, to make place for us, he having to go and chum with some one else. The khan-keeper got us some supper, and we awaited the arrival of the boats in peace. At last Mohammed returned, and said that he had found the people housed in a khan on the other side, having got tired of

waiting on the river bank, and that the muleteers said that they were too tired to load up again ; so that he had to be content with bringing our sleeping sacks for us, which he had the good sense to think of.

We were soon sleeping the sleep of the tired, though our three selves, Schaefer, Gabriel and I, nearly filled up the available floor space, and our greyhounds—of which we now had three, having bought a white one called Saada at Jerablus—as usual, wanted the most comfortable corners.

Next day we got boats away betimes for our people, and as our tubs had not arrived went to the Turkish bath, which proved a very comfortable place on a cold wet day. Whilst in the hot room a fat old fellow came up and saluted us most warmly, and I could not make out who it was for some time, when it turned out to be Hajji Schalbach, whom I could scarcely recognise, the absence of clothes making such a difference in his personal appearance. Our people did not get over in time for us to make

a start forward, so we had to be content to wait a day ; but now other travellers had left the khan, and we got ample accommodation rooms for sleeping and the servants, one for sitting in, kitchen for the cook, and stables for the horses, all under the same roof. Our stay also gave us an opportunity of replenishing our stores of sugar, tobacco, coffee, and other small necessaries, which we had not had an opportunity of doing since leaving Aleppo ; and doing a little mending in our wardrobes and saddlery, so we resigned ourselves to it contentedly.

CHAPTER III.

English merchants, Ralf Fitch—Sir Edward Osborne—Birra—Feligia—A gun is very good—John Eldred—A dry town—Maundrell—Bashaw of Urfa—Chesney—Traveling bad—A curious town—A mere shell—Large tents—Caves—German sausage—Sport—Scouts the idea—A curious instance—A wizard—Full confidence—A samovar—Carts—A procession—The *Mustafis*—Three instead of two—Mohair goats—A wild looking fellow—In the wars—A dispute—Robbers—Starts off running—The most cowardly—Mock courage—Patrol—Quite happy—Tsamelik—Wet and cold—Splash, splash, splash—Smell smoke—Fear of robbers—A dreary scene—Nimshi—Close proximity—Dull and gloomy—Weary plodding—The Cadi—Orfa—Liquid mud—Pitchy darkness—The Serai—The Sergeant-Major—The Bimbashi—An invitation.

BIR-ED-JIK, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, was well known to our English merchants, who used to pass by there in their adventurous journeys to the Indies. Some used to take boat at Bir-ed-jik and drift down the Euphrates;

others, "in order that they might sooner and with less labour reach Bagdat," used to go by Orfa to the Tigris. Though we may conjecture that the boats they used were somewhat like the ferry boats, and therefore not over easy to navigate, still we can see from the precautions taken by these pioneers of commerce that the voyage was a difficult and dangerous one.

Several of these journeys are described by those who took part in them and the following extract from one may be of interest :—

"In the year of our Lord 1583 I, Ralf Fitch, of London, merchant, being desirous to see the countries of the East India, in the company of Mr. John Newberie, merchant, (who had been at Ormuz once before,) of William Leeds, jeweller, and James Storie, painter, being chiefly set forth by the Right Worshipful Sir Edward Osborne,¹ knight, and Mr. Richard Steper, citizens and merchants of London, did ship myself in a ship of London, called the Tygre, wherein we went for Tripolis, in Syria, and from thence we took the way to Aleppo, which we went in seven days with the caravan. Being in Aleppo and finding good company, we went from thence to Birra, which is two days and a half travel

¹ His great grandson, Sir Thomas Osborne, when prime minister, was made Earl of Danby by Charles II., and afterwards created Marquis of Carmarthen and Duke of Leeds, by William of Orange.

with camels. Birra is a little town, but very plentiful of victuals, and near to the walls of the town runneth the river Euphrates. There we bought a boat and agreed with a master and bargeman to go to Babylon; these boats to be had but for one voyage, for the stream doth run so fast downwards that they cannot return. They carry you to a town, which they call Felugia, and then you sell the boat for a little money; for that which cost you fifty at Birra you will sell there for seven or eight. From Birra to Felugia is sixteen days' journey; it is not good that one boat should go alone, for if it should chance to break, you should have much ado to save your goods from the Arabians, who will always be thereabouts robbing, and in the night when your boats are made fast it is necessary you should keep good watch. For the Arabians, who are thieves, will come swimming, and steal your goods, and flee away, against which a gun is very good, for they fear it very much. In the river of Euphrates, from Birra to Felugia, there are certain places where you pay custom, so many medines for a horse or camel's lading, and certain raisins and soap, which is for the sons of Arbaries, who is lord of the Arabians, and of all that great desert, and hath some villages upon the river. Felugia, where you unload your goods which come from Birra, is a little village from whence you may go to Babylon in a day."

In 1583 John Eldred "with six or seven other honest merchants" set sail from London. They arrived at Tripoli where the English had a consul and a factory called "*Fondeghi Inglis*." Then from Tripoli they went to Aleppo, which was "the greatest place of traffic for a dry town,

that is in all these parts," and thence in three days to "Biresh." He said that the stream there was as "big as the Thames at Lambeth, and running almost as swift as the Trent." In twenty-eight days he arrived at Felugia and was then transported by donkeys to Baghdad, where they again took ship for "Bassora."

Maundrell in 1699 writes as follows:—

"April 20th. The river is here (Jerabolus) as large as the Thames at London; a long bullet gun could not shoot a ball over it, but it dropped in the river.

"April 22nd. We continued at our station (opposite Bir) not daring to cross the river for fear of falling into the hands of the chiah of the Bashaw of Urfa, who was at Bir, ordering many boats of corn down to Bagdad.

"April 23rd. The chiah being now departed, Sheik Assyne invited us over to Bir. We crossed in a boat of the country, of which they have a great many, this being the great pass into Mesopotamia. The boats are of a miserable fabric, flat and open in the fore part for horses to enter. They are large enough to carry about four horses each. Their way to cross is by drawing up the boat as high as they know to be necessary, and then with wretched oars striking over; she falls a good way down, by the force of the stream, before they arrive at the further side."

Chesney found at Bir-ed-jik sixteen ferry boats, and heard that the caravans sometimes amounted to five thousand camels.

Even in earlier days Bir was of great importance, as we find it repelling an attack made upon it by Sapor, the opponent of Julian the Apostate, who sought to seize it as commanding the passage of the Euphrates.

We ourselves found fifteen ferry boats, and although rain had rendered the travelling very bad, over five hundred camels crossed the river each way during the day we were there; and camped on the outskirts of the town were over a thousand more.

Maundrell's account is interesting as showing that the ferry boats in his time were much the same as they are at present, showing plainly the non-progressive nature of the Turks. It might have been thought that General Chesney's visit with his staff for the examination of the Euphrates, would have stirred the people up somewhat, but it was altogether forgotten.

We spent some time walking about the town, which was a very curious one. The side of the hill against which it was built

was so steep that the floor of one house was on a level with the roof of that in front, so that the greater portion of the town was precisely like a series of steps, the tops of the houses forming one row being used as a street by those behind. The old castle, which is partly of Genoese and partly of Turkish architecture, is now a mere shell, there being only a few small rooms or huts inhabitable, which are occupied by the zaptieh and soldiers stationed in the town. Outside the town, on the south, is a level space where the caravans encamp, and where there are large open tents for the shelter of men and goods, these are the property of the government, who leases them out to men who charge for their use. In addition to these tents and the khans in the town, which are used by people travelling with mules and horses, there are also caves excavated in the soft chalk hills, which are also used as lodging-places by travellers and their animals. Some of these are very large and can accommodate a large

number of camels ; they are principally used when the weather is too severe for people to live under the open tents.

During our walk round the town we paid a visit to the Kaimacan to thank him for his civility of the previous evening, and found him alone. Besides his raki and wine, he now brought out some German sausage, which, notwithstanding its being covered in tin foil, he was at some pains to explain to us was made of mutton in the town, lest we should suspect him of eating the unclean flesh of swine. Like many another Turk he did not mind that people should know that he did not adhere to the precepts of the Koran respecting strong drink, but could not endure to have it known that he indulged in the unclean beast. Our noticing his gun brought the conversation round to sport, and he said that round Bir-ed-jik there were lots of wild fowl, and that he often got a wild boar or a gazelle. When we told him how the pig at Jerablus had almost invariably taken to the

river when wounded and swum to a place of safety, he said that when he went after wild boar he used to take one of the ferry boats, so that when a pig crossed the river he was able to go after it. He asked about our success at Jerablus in digging, but quite scouted the idea of having sent down to interfere with the work. He declared that the only message he had sent, was to tell Shaykh Hosayn to assist in every possible way. Very likely he had really sent down to see if we were searching for gold, as no Turk can understand the idea of our wanting to find out the history of the ancients. That things have been, are, and will be, is quite enough for them. A very curious instance of the way the inhabitants of these countries regard the excavations which are being made, was brought under my own notice. A Christian family, some of the members of which were employed in positions of trust in one of the English parties engaged in this work, was told by a diviner or wizard that the

English found gold when the workmen were away. This fellow declared that he could find gold for them in the same way, as he had seen some of the stones which had been dug up and was able to interpret the inscriptions. The gold he said was hidden in their house, and if they would pay him well, he promised to show it them. They paid him liberally, and acting under his instructions nearly pulled their house down in the search, and of course found nothing. Notwithstanding, they still placed full confidence in their informant, who said he had made a slight mistake, and to whom they had promised more money as soon as they were able to obtain it to go on with the search.

When we left the Kaimacan we paid a short visit to Hajji Schalbach, who welcomed us warmly and invited us to leave the khan and stay with him for a week. This of course we refused to do, and then when he had given us tea, he wished to force upon our acceptance a Russian *samovar*, in which he

had made it. He insisted that it would be a capital thing in the tent in cold weather, and seemed really grieved that we would not accept it as a present. He was busy with some carpenters belonging to the place in constructing two carts for use in his farms, as he had somewhere seen Circassians using carts and had at once recognised the superiority of wheeled vehicles over pack animals. About these he wanted our advice, but as his carts, although very simple in their construction, seemed effective, we were not able to be of any great use to him.

On our way back to the khan we passed a procession of small girls, trotting round the town attired in their best, and singing and clapping their hands. At the head was a little child of eleven or twelve, over whose head two bigger girls held a sort of canopy. The little girl was covered with gold coins and other finery, and was evidently the centre of attraction. On our asking what it was all about, we were told that it was a *fête* in honour of her having completed

reading the *Mustafiz*, one of the Mohammedan religious books.

During the day we had had our horses shod, and replenished our stock of tobacco and provisions, so we were in fact ready to start the first thing the next morning. Our traps, indeed, were all packed up by half past six, but the muleteers wanted to make the journey to Orfa last three, instead of two days, and would not bring their mules up to be loaded without a great deal of arguing and trouble, so that it was half past ten before we started. We left in the midst of a shower of drizzling rain, first passing through numerous vineyards, and then over a hilly and broken country for about two hours; near the summits of many of the hills were numerous caves, which are used by the goatherds to shelter them and their flocks. The latter were very numerous, and amongst them were many of the goats which produce mohair.

Coming to a small building where there was a well, and which had been built as a refuge

for benighted travellers, we halted for luncheon and to wait for our mules. I was giving my horse some carrots which I had bought as we were leaving the town, when a wild looking fellow came rushing up, and knelt down as if to beseech assistance, but was far too excited to say anything intelligible. Almost immediately afterwards there appeared two men, with three camels and a donkey. These two had evidently been in the wars, for one had his head bleeding, and both had their clothes torn and dirty. When they saw the kneeling man, they commenced threatening and abusing him. After some little time we got them composed enough to tell their different stories, although we had hard work to keep them from coming to blows. It appeared that all three had been travelling together, the man who arrived first having asked permission to accompany the other two for safety and protection. About half an hour before they met us, the two men, who were owners of the camels, were set upon by robbers who beat and wounded them,

and took all their money. The other man was not molested by the robbers, and did not attempt to assist his fellow travellers. The latter, upon this, when the robbers had departed, took his donkey from him, and said that unless he went with them to the town for which they were bound, to bear witness against the robbers, they would keep it instead of the money of which they had been robbed. He objected very strongly, and swore he had never seen the robbers before, and that he was only left alone because they saw he was too poor to be worth robbing. We of course could do nothing in the matter, more especially as Mohammed, who was with us, said he thought that most probably the donkey man was in league with the thieves. The camel drivers soon departed on their road, taking the donkey with them, whilst its owner started off running towards a hamlet some two miles away.

Our mules now came up, and the people were all in great fright about the robbers, of whose proximity they had been warned by some

shepherds. The most cowardly of the lot was carrying my fowling-piece, which he had taken out of its cover, and seemed much astonished at being slanged for getting it wet. The other men told us that he had proposed to desert the baggage, and run, if the robbers appeared whilst we were not with them, but when he saw us he said, "Now, I will appear brave. I will take the Captain's gun and tell him that I was ready to defend his property to the death," and had composed a fine set speech to that effect, which he was very much put out at not being able to deliver.

As we had had proof that robbers were about, we, when we went on again, kept near to the mules, and soon heard shouts of *Arrahmy! Arrahmy!!* (robbers! robbers!!) and saw running on a course nearly parallel to the road, about half a dozen men who seemed to be trying to escape our observation. As the road though now pretty level was flanked by hills, I and the zaptieh patrolled on each side so as to get an early view of these people

if they intended to attack us, whilst Schaefer and Gabriel kept the mules closed up, and placed the servants and muleteers in proper positions to defend the baggage. After marching some miles in this warlike order, we saw the men coming towards us with a donkey, and they turned out to be the man whose donkey had been taken by the camel-drivers, and some of his friends. The owner of the donkey now seemed quite happy, as they had caught the camel-drivers, given them a thrashing, and recovered his donkey.

The rain had been falling most of the day, and the ground was so muddy and slippery that we could only make very slow progress, the loaded mules slipping and tumbling about in a most piteous manner. At sunset we found ourselves still far from Tsamelik, but the only place in sight was so small and wretched that we determined on pressing on. What with rain, and the absence of the moon, it soon became so dark that we could not see our horses' heads, much less each other. The only guide to

the road was the reflection of the little light that still lingered in the water lying in the ruts worn by the feet of passing animals. It was a very uncomfortable ride, wet and cold, and the horses slipping and splashing about most disagreeably. I got off, and tried to warm myself by walking, but found the mud so heavy and sticky, that I soon had lumps weighing about twenty pounds on each of my boots, whilst, notwithstanding its adhesiveness, it was so slippery that I found great difficulty in keeping on my feet, so that I had to get on my horse again, and trust to his being more sure-footed than I was.

Splash, splash, splash, on we went until at last we came to where the track divided into two, and no one knew which was the right one to take; the compass was no use, as the two paths only differed about a couple of points in their direction. We were nonplussed for a time, and then we fancied we smelt smoke, so chose the one which was nearest to the direction we thought the smell came from. Soon the

dogs began to run, and the horses to step out more cheerfully, and then, joyful sound! we heard the barking of dogs.

In another quarter of an hour we came to a large khan, and this was Tsamelik. The doors were closed, and we could make no one hear for some time, though we hammered at them with all our might, and shouted, and yelled. At last we heard a man inside who said that the place was closed for the night and would not be opened again for fear we were robbers; at last he opened and we went in. We found some shepherds and their flocks were the sole occupants, and from them we got about a quarter of an inch of candle; this we lit with some difficulty, and a dreary scene was before us. The goats and their owners took up all one side of the quadrangle except a small piece which, notwithstanding its being sheltered from the rain by a roof, was knee deep in mud and muck. The doors of the buildings on the other three sides were locked, so we were obliged to take shelter in this corner

whilst Mohammed and one of the goatherds went to look for the man in whose charge the khan was, to get the keys. The mules came straggling in one by one, and one was so exhausted that he lay down, load and all, and Nimshi, who always took care of herself, instantly lay down on the top of him.

After another quarter of an hour Mohammed returned with the khan-keeper who opened one of the side buildings and there we found a dry stable. By this time all the mules had arrived, and we soon made ourselves comfortable, the only drawback being that we and our animals were in rather too close proximity. Supper and bed was the order of the day, and we were soon sound asleep, but were disturbed during the night by one of the horses getting loose and kicking over the box on which were placed my aneroid, thermometers and other instruments. Luckily nothing was lost or damaged, and order was soon restored.

The morning broke dull and gloomy, but as there was no halting-place between us and

Orfa, the muleteers for once bestirred themselves and we got away pretty soon.

The day's march was very nearly a repetition of the previous one, the only occurrences being, seeing some large bustards, and meeting the *cadi* of Diarbekr, who was on his way to the coast. The bustards we attempted to stalk, and if the mud on the road was bad, it was worse on the freshly ploughed ground where the birds were; so that after a half an hour's weary plodding after them and failing to get within rifle range, we were obliged to give up our pursuit and were glad to get on our horses again.

The *cadi* had an escort of half a dozen *zaptieh* and an officer, and was accompanied by his wives, who were carried in closely curtained *tak-tarawans* or mule litters.

The mules were so bothered by the mud that it was evening when we got to the top of the ridge of hills on the eastern side of which Orfa lies. Down the steep hill-side was cut a winding road, in some places out of the solid

rock, and which had evidently required a vast amount of labour, but which was constructed on such bad principles as to be rapidly falling into a state of disrepair.

When we got into the town it was already dark, and scarcely a soul was moving about. We found our way through streets, which were knee deep in liquid mud with the exception of small raised footways, to a couple of khans, both of which the keepers declared were full. At one of these khans we got a man with a lantern who promised to show us the way to another, but who soon bolted, and we were left in pitchy darkness and not knowing where to go. We could do nothing but knock at the first door we found, and after some time the owner of the house opened it and asked what we wanted. We begged for a guide with a lantern to show us the way either to a khan where we could get lodging or else to the *serai* where we might find some official to assist us. He very kindly sent one of his servants with us to the *serai* which we found in charge of a sergeant-

major of zaptieh, all the superior officers having gone to a party at Halil Bey's, who was one of the notables of the town. The sergeant-major took us into the guard-room, which was warmed by a mangal, and gave us coffee, whilst one of his men went for the Bimbashi. The Bimbashi soon came from Halil Bey's and insisted on going with us himself to find lodgings for ourselves and animals.

He took us back to one of the khans which had already turned us away, but which at the voice of authority was speedily opened, and where rooms were at once provided. Not content with seeing us lodged, he waited before going back to his friends to see us comfortably established and all our wants supplied. Soon after he had gone we received an invitation from Halil Bey to join their party, but as we were tired, wet, and dirty and also heard that the party would most likely degenerate into a mere orgie towards the small hours, we thought it best to decline with thanks.

CHAPTER IV.

The purest dialect—The Abgari—Leprosy—Our Lord—Marvellous—Sacriligious hands—Naked and wounded—Healed—Pious visitants—Chiefest treasure—Ransomed—Nimrod and Abraham—Disapproves of sermons—A huge fire—Two springs—Sacred fishes—"The prophets"—A blessed admonition—Manifest error—"Brake them all in pieces"—Bear witness—Impious persons—Burn him—Jewish version—Terah—Sacriligious action—Ur of the Chaldees—Baal—A Magian Priest—Cûtha—Odoriferous air—Tower of Babel—A cure for headache—Eastern Christians—Odenathus—Julian—Satire—Chosroes—Emperor Maurice—Baldwin—Courtenays—Zenghi—Bimbashi's horses—Monsieur Martin—Stock of spoons—Wanderers—English schoolmaster—Slaves—Supposed to govern—Our portly friend—Heavy bribes—Legends—Arab honour—A promise—The value of a knife—Feed the fishes—Ibrahim Chaoush—His father—Soaking clothes—Five lumps—Wool—Huge loads—Promiscuous confusion—"Nasty particular"—Severick.

ORFA, the Edessa of the ancients, for long played an important part in the history of the East. Though its inhabitants were styled

barbarians by the luxurious citizens of Antioch, the purest dialect of Syriac, the Aramœan, was spoken in their streets and taught in their schools and colleges.

Under the successive monarchs who assumed, on commencing their reign, the surname of Abgarus, its alliance was sought both by the Romans and the Parthians, and their friendship often determined the result of the wars which were constantly being waged between the two empires.

It was to one of these Abgari that the famous Palladium was sent by our Saviour. According to the tradition now related at Orfa, the handkerchief bearing the miraculous impression never arrived at its destination, but in the pages of history we read of its assistance being invoked to repel the assaults of heathen and Moslem foes.

The story told me at Orfa was that the king Abgarus, being afflicted with leprosy, had long sought for relief from his loathsome disease but without effect. Hearing of a

prophet among the Jews who had healed many of their illnesses, he sent his Prime Minister to Jerusalem to beg for aid, and also to offer him an asylum from the persecution of the Jews. When his envoy arrived at Jerusalem he found our Lord teaching in the temple, and told Him his mission. He pleaded long and earnestly the cause of his king and master, and our Saviour took from him a silken handkerchief with which He wiped His face, and returning it to the suppliant said: "If your king will do likewise his leprosy will be healed." Marvellous to relate, on the handkerchief appeared the imprint of our Saviour's features.

The envoy hastened back with the precious gift, and being anxious to arrive quickly at Orfa outstripped his escort and rode on alone. A few miles before reaching his destination he was attacked by robbers, and in order to save his sacred charge from their sacrilegious hands he cast it into a tank or reservoir cut in the rocks.

After some time he escaped from the hands of the robbers, and naked and wounded made his way into the presence of Abgarus. When he had told his story, the king ordered his guards to accompany him to the tank, which he caused to be emptied of its contents. No handkerchief was there, but a spring of clear and sparkling water was gushing forth from the solid rock.

Abgarus, regarding this as a miracle, said that if he washed in the water it would have the same effect as if he had used the lost handkerchief. Washing he was healed and his flesh became as other men's flesh.

The spring remains to the present day and is regarded as sacred by both Christians and Mohammedans, though it seems to have lost its healing qualities, as poor lepers are always to be found there who subsist on the charities of pious visitants.

In history we find that the sacred handkerchief was long regarded as the chiefest treasure and defence of the city. After having

been lost to sight for five hundred years the Bishop of Edessa presented it to the gaze of an adoring multitude. It was soon credited with having repelled the assault of Chosroes by its presence on the ramparts, and its possession was supposed to ensure the town from ever falling into the hands of Pagan conquerers.

Notwithstanding the possession of this *ἀχειροποίητος*, and having successfully resisted her Persian assailants, Edessa was fated to fall into the hands of the Saracens, and the holy image was retained by them for three hundred years, until the piety of the rulers of Constantinople ransomed it from their hands by payment of twelve thousand pounds of silver, the liberation of two hundred prisoners, and the proclamation of a perpetual truce in the country around Edessa.

Another legend which is told with all gravity, is one about Nimrod and Abraham. Standing out boldly above the present town, but within the precincts of its ancient walls, are two

magnificent Corinthian columns, sole remains of some ancient temple. These are said to have been erected by Nimrod "the mighty hunter before the Lord." He and Abraham were together at Orfa, and Abraham, presuming on his superior piety, used to preach to Nimrod about his evil ways and those of his followers. Nimrod did not approve of the sermons and determined to punish Abraham for his interference. He therefore ordered the columns to be built, and put a swing between them. Below he had a huge fire made, which was so fierce that no man dared approach. Putting Abraham into the swing, he launched him into the flames. Abraham fell to the ground in the attitude of prayer, and from the prints made by his knees immediately gushed forth two springs, which extinguished the flames before they had inflicted the slightest injury on his person or his raiment.

Over these springs, which are some forty feet apart, is built a large mosque, and the water flows into two large pools crowded with a

species of carp, which are daily fed by the faithful. The dervish who showed us the place said that they were the soldiers of Abraham, but one of his brethren declared that they were the people of Nimrod—and who is to decide when Doctors differ ?

This legend about Nimrod and Abraham is very ancient and is referred to in the twenty-first chapter of *Al Koran*, entitled "The Prophets." The reason of Nimrod persecuting Abraham is that the latter destroyed the idols of Terah, his father. The passage itself stands as follows :—

"And this book also is a blessed admonition ; which we have sent down from heaven : will ye therefore deny it ? and we gave unto Abraham his direction heretofore, and we knew him to be worthy of the revelations wherewith he was favoured. Remember when he said unto his father, and his people, 'What are the images to which ye are so entirely devoted ?' They answered, 'We found our fathers worshipping them.' He said, 'Verily both ye and your fathers have been in manifest error.' They said, 'Dost thou seriously tell us the truth, or art thou one who jestest with us ?' He replied, 'Verily your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth ; it is He who hath created them : and I am one of those who bear witness thereof. By God I will surely devise a plot against your idols, after you shall have retired from them and shall have turned your backs.' And in the

people's absence he went into the temple where the idols stood, and he brake them all in pieces, except the biggest of them; that they might lay the blame upon that. And when they were returned and saw the havoc which had been made, they said, 'Who hath done this unto our gods? He is certainly an impious person.' And certain of them answered, 'We heard a young man speak reproachfully of them: he is named Abraham.' They said, 'Bring him therefore before the eyes of the people that they may bear witness against him.' And when he was brought before the assembly, they said unto him, 'Hast thou done this unto our gods, O Abraham?' He answered, 'Nay, that the biggest of them hath done it; but ask them, if they can speak.' And they returned unto themselves, and said the one to the other, 'Verily ye are the impious persons.' Afterwards they relapsed into their former obstinacy and said, 'Verily thou knowest that these speak not.' Abraham answered, 'Do ye therefore worship, besides God, that which cannot profit you at all, neither can he hurt you? Fie on you, and upon that which ye worship besides God! Do ye not understand?' They said, 'Burn him and avenge your gods: if ye do this it will be well.' And when Abraham was cast into the pile, we said, 'O fire be thou cold and a preservation unto Abraham.' And they sought to lay a plot against him: but we caused them to be sufferers, and we delivered him and Lot by bringing them into the land where we have blessed all things."

The Jewish version on which the Moham-
medan one is founded is that Abraham went
into his father Terah's shop during his absence
and broke the idols up. When Terah returned
home he inquired how it was they had been

destroyed. Abraham replied that they had quarrelled among themselves as to who was to possess a beautiful flower which had been offered to them by an old woman. Terah seeing the dilemma in which he was placed, that if he said his gods could not fight he would admit that they were powerless, fell into a violent passion, and bound Abraham, and carried him into the presence of Nimrod that he might be punished for his sacrilegious action and blasphemy. The Jews also translate Ur of the Chaldees, as the fire of the Chaldees, instead of allowing that Ur is the proper name of a city, thereby implying that Nimrod attempted to punish Abraham by burning him.

The Mohammedan fable traverses nearly the same ground. Abraham having concealed himself in the temple of the heathen gods, destroyed all the idols, save the largest, whilst the Chaldeans were all absent at an open air festival. Round the neck of the idol he had spared, he hung the axe or hammer he had used in the work of destruction. When the

Chaldeans returned, and he was questioned about the matter, he said they could see that Baal, as the great idol was called, had done it, and still had the axe he had used hanging from his neck. His countrymen were much enraged and carried him off to Nimrod for trial, and he was condemned to be burnt alive. According to some this sentence was pronounced by either a Persian Kurd, called Heyyûn, or a Magian priest, called Andesshan, who, when he spoke against the prophet was immediately swallowed up alive by the earth. Others say that Nimrod himself pronounced the sentence.

Whoever pronounced Abraham's doom it was Nimrod who attempted to carry it into execution. He ordered a large place at Cûtha to be inclosed and filled with a vast quantity of firewood. When the pile was fired it burnt so fiercely that none durst approach it. Nimrod ordered Abraham to be bound, and then placing him in an engine, specially provided by the devil, shot him into the midst of the fire. The angel Gabriel came to Abraham's

assistance, so that the fire did him no harm, and only burnt the cords which confined him. It is added that the fire having miraculously lost its power over Abraham, became to him as a pleasant and odoriferous air, whilst two thousand of the idolaters were consumed by it.

Nimrod on seeing this miraculous deliverance cried out that he would make a sacrifice to the God of Abraham, and offered four thousand cattle. He soon, however, relapsed into his former infidelity, and after failing to reach heaven by means of the tower of Babel again renewed the attempt by means of four enormous birds, who carried a chest in which he had placed himself. This also failed, and finding his efforts against God could not prevail, he again turned his attention to Abraham. Abraham called to his assistance vast swarms of gnats, one of which penetrated into Nimrod's ear, and caused him such horrible pain that he caused his head to be beaten with a mallet in order to relieve it. This torture he endured

until his death which occurred four hundred years afterwards.

These fables are not only believed by many Jews and Mohammedans, but also by a large proportion of the Eastern Christians. In the Syrian Church, the twenty-fifth of January (the second *Canān*) is celebrated as the anniversary of Abraham being delivered from the flames, and the second of July (*Thamāz*) as that of the death of Nimrod.

The position of Edessa at the foot of the mountains and on the borders of the great Mesopotamian plain rendered it a position of great strategical importance, and Sapor I., by its acquisition, was enabled to extend his ravages even to Antioch and Homs; whilst on his retreat, when harassed by Odenathus of Palmyra, husband of the famous Zenobia, he was obliged to purchase the neutrality of the inhabitants by giving to them all the plunder he had carried off from the temple of Venus at Homs.

Constantius made it his head-quarters when threatened by Sapor II. in the East, and the

rebellion of his cousin Julian in the West. After his death, and Julian had assumed the imperial purple, the Christians of the town were unlucky enough to draw upon themselves the anger of the latter monarch, who despoiled them of all their goods, and aggravated his tyranny by the following biting and ironical speech :—

“ I show myself the true friend of the Galileans. Their *admirable* law has promised the kingdom of Heaven to the poor ; and they will advance with more diligence in the paths of virtue and salvation when they are relieved by my assistance from the load of temporal possessions.”

In the wars between Chosroes and Justinian, we again find Edessa occupying a most important place, and it was mainly owing to the repulse of Chosroes by its gallant garrison that he agreed to a truce of five years. It was during this siege that the Palladium was alleged to have aided in repulsing the assailants, and by its presence on the walls to have contributed to the destruction of their engines by fire.

Fifty years later the mutinous conduct of the Roman army, which shook the empire to its foundations, reached its culminating point at Edessa, where the soldiers overturned the statues of the emperors, and cast stones at the miraculous handkerchief, and were only induced to return to their allegiance by large gifts from the Emperor Maurice.

Submerged by the wave of Saracen conquest, Edessa was won back to the rule of the cross by Baldwin, younger brother of Godfrey de Bouillon first king of Jerusalem. Though wearing the garments of a crusader and bound by their oaths, he did not scruple to act treacherously to a Christian in order to enrich himself. Edessa at that time, though subject to the Moslems, was a Christian town and ruled by an Armenian. This Armenian asked Baldwin to deliver him and his people from the yoke of the Saracens. Baldwin accepted the invitation, and calling himself the son and champion of the unfortunate ruler was admitted into the town. Murdering his host and

possessing himself of his treasure, he established himself in power, and founded a Christian principality in Mesopotamia, which lasted for over half a century. ¶ To this county of Edessa, the family of Courtenay afterwards became heirs, and the only surviving branch of the family are the Courtenays of England, in whose line for some time has been the Earldom of Devon, and who for more than six hundred years have filled a worthy place in English history, notwithstanding their regretful motto, "*Ubi lapsus, quid feci.*"

Towards the end of the first half of the twelfth century the Turkish hero Zenghi, after a siege of twenty five days, stormed the city of Edessa, and though he lost his life he subjected her again to Mohammedan domination under which she still labours.

A city with such a varied and momentous history cannot be supposed to boast of many remains, and the two columns are the most important; a few square minarets mark the spots where a Christian church has been

degraded into a Mohammedan mosque, and the walls and other traces of fortifications are still in a fair state of preservation.

Early in the morning we received a visit from the Bimbashi, who came down to see that we were treated with all due respect and comfortably lodged. We invited him to come to dinner with us, and ordered Elias to show what skill he possessed in order to do honour to the occasion. The Bimbashi rode down on a very handsome horse, and when we admired it he asked us to pay a visit to his stables where he said he had ten horses and mares all of good breed. Soon after, he left Monsieur Martin the French Vice-Consul, to whom we had a letter of introduction from his father-in-law, Mr. Nahoun (dragoman to the English Consulate at Aleppo), and upbraided us very much for not having come to his house the night before instead of going to a khan. He wished us to change our quarters at once, but we had made our room so comfortable that we were loth to sacrifice our

independence. We could not invite him to dinner to meet the Bimbashi, owing to our stock of spoons, forks, etc., being too limited, but made him promise to come on the morrow to have luncheon with us. He quite wondered at the way we had arranged our room. A mere cell of a room, with a door and window and rough stone walls, we had converted into a comfortable-looking apartment. Round the walls we had put the sides of our tent and eked them out by plaids. Our trunks covered with plaids and rugs formed seats, and our table covered with books and writing materials was in the middle. Guns were ranged in order, and on some large nails which we always carried for the purpose were hung our pistols, belts, field glasses, and compasses. Aneroids, thermometers, and watches were arranged on their board, and it looked quite as if we had taken a permanent lease of the place instead of being mere wayfaring wanderers.

When Monsieur Martin left, another visitor came dressed in European clothes, and wearing

a fez, who instantly commenced with "How is your health; I hope the country is pleasant as you find it." This gave me hopes that we were to be able to have a conversation in English, but though our friend informed us that he was the master of an English school, and rolled out his first questions easily enough, he could not keep up a fluent conversation. He had great complaints to make about the way in which the Christians were treated, but was very vague in what he said. I asked him to tell me any instances of ill-usage or hardship so that I might write to our consul on the subject, but he would only say, "In every way."

"It is no use telling us that they are badly used in every way; let us know some particular case and we will write about it."

"Oh! they are treated like slaves."

"But how? Slaves are sometimes treated very well."

"Oh! we are badly used in every way that slaves can be badly used."

I of course had to tell him again that a general and vague complaint was of little or no use, but that any well authenticated case of ill-usage or hardship I would report at once. All we could get out of him was that the Christians were despised by the Mohammedans and looked upon as an inferior race. When he left we went and called on the Pasha, who was just on the point of starting for Aleppo, and his *locum tenens*, a friend and countryman of Khamil Pasha, was with him. The Pasha talked cleverly, as many Turks do, about the necessity of roads and railways; but as we heard his presence at Aleppo was required to answer a charge of malappropriation of public funds, I suppose he was no better than any other of the Pashas who are supposed to govern Asiatic Turkey.

As we left the Pasha's rooms we came upon our portly friend the Bimbashi and the Sergeant-Major. With the former we had coffee, and whilst in his room made the acquaintance of a dervish, who spoke a little French and promised

to show us the holes made by the knees of Abraham. After this we called on Monsieur Martin and made the acquaintance of his wife and children. Monsieur Martin has bought a large tract of country near Orfa, which he cultivates, and exports the wheat. Notwithstanding his title deeds having been made out and legalised at Constantinople, he was not allowed by successive governors to enter upon full possession until he had paid heavy bribes; three or four times he gave fifty pounds, but though allowed to cultivate his land they would not register his deeds. At last he was tired of frittering away his money, and paid two hundred and fifty pounds in one sum which had the desired effect. He said he was very successful but the scarcity and cost of carriage weighed heavily on him. In good seasons he told us that he often sent off twelve hundred camels in one day.

He was full of information and stories, and told me the legends about Abgarus and Nimrod, and also one about Tsamelik. Three small

kings seeing that there was no shelter for travellers on the road between Bir-ed-jik and Orfa, built the khan where we had slept. Other kings, whose names are forgotten, hearing they were building a fortress sent an army against them and killed them. The names of the jealous monarchs are lost but Tsamelik preserves the memory of the three who built the khan.

He had spent much time among the Bedouins, and told us some stories about their generosity and sense of honour and hospitality. "Once an Arab Shaykh possessed a mare which was reputed to be the best in the whole region, and though many a stratagem and wile had been employed by his enemies and rivals to obtain possession of her, none had succeeded. At last, one day as he was approaching a spring where he was going to rest, he saw a poor beggar apparently unable to walk lying by the wayside. He dismounted and placed the sufferer on his mare. The moment the latter was mounted he started off, and said, "Son

of such a one, I am so and so, and I have obtained possession of your mare."

The owner said, "So be it, but promise me two things—the first that you will treat the mare well, the second that you will never tell any one how you obtained her, as it will prevent people from assisting the poor and needy." The robber was so struck by his generosity, that he dismounted from the mare and returned her to her owner, and the two were ever after fast friends.

Another story was about the conduct of an Arab towards a European. The latter had been visiting a Shaykh, and on leaving left behind him a knife. This was found and brought to the Shaykh; he did not know where his guest was gone, and therefore could not return it to him. Some fifteen or twenty years after, the two met once more, and the Shaykh, showing him camels, sheep, and horses, said, "Those are your property." His friend was astonished, and asked how this could be. "Do you not remember leaving a knife behind you

when you were with me before? I could not send it to you, and I could not keep it to be eaten by rust, so I sold it for a she camel; from that camel and her produce, and by trading, I have amassed these animals, and now they are yours."

Our dinner in the evening to the Bimbashi was a great success. The next day we visited the mosque of Abraham, fed the fishes, inspected the horses of the Bimbashi and rode two of them, and in the evening dined with the Martins.

Next morning Schaefer and I started with Daher and Elias, leaving Gabriel in charge of the other servants and dogs and of our baggage under Monsieur Martin's roof, for Diarbekr, where we had promised to go to visit Major Trotter. As usual engaging fresh mules was a great deal of trouble, and if it had not been for the Bimbashi's aid we should not have got away when we did. Even with his assistance the four that we did get were wretched tired brutes, and it was past ten

o'clock before we started in the midst of pelting rain.

The Bimbashi had given us besides our old zaptieh another, Ibrahim Chaoush, as he said the Kurds, through whose country we would be travelling, were in a very unsettled state, and that it was better for us to be a strong party. The rain continued to fall, and the mud was deep often up to the horses' houghs, in other places it was so slippery that they could hardly stand. About three P.M., as we were passing through a village, we were stopped by a venerable old man who brought out coffee and wanted us to stop for the night, but we were determined to make the best of our way and pressed on. This old man we found was the father of Ibrahim Chaoush and he utterly refused a small tip which we offered him. At about half an hour after sunset we reached a village in which amidst squalid huts stood a very nice-looking stone house. This was the habitation of the head man, who instantly put his reception room at our disposal. At one end

was a large fireplace with a chimney and a cheerful fire of brushwood and camels' dung blazing merrily. This we were not sorry to see and to avail ourselves of it to dry our soaking clothes and boots.

The old gentleman to whom the house belonged and some of his sons and friends bore us company and joined in our meal, and in tea-drinking afterwards. The tea they seemed to relish on account of the sugar, and much amusement was caused by one of the sons being found with five large lumps in his hand when he was asking for more.

The father was a very rich man, owning flocks and herds and a very large number of Angora goats. He had been a traveller in his day, having visited Cairo and Constantinople, and still had correspondents in Aleppo to whom he consigned his wool.

Next morning there was scarcely any improvement in the weather or the road, though some of the streams were bridged; but often the pitch of the bridge was so steep and the

roadway so bad that it was much safer to ford the stream. No camels were to be seen on the road, as it was too dangerous for them to travel; but we constantly met mules bearing huge loads of hides, wool, and other produce of Kurdistan. We also passed caravans, composed entirely of donkeys, and as they were very diminutive, and their packs very big, so that one could only see legs and head, the sight was peculiar. Though apparently overloaded, the little beasts seemed to get along merrily. The rain in the afternoon was almost continuous, and the badness of the road such that we could not move out of a walk, and that of the slowest description; so that when it fell dark we were still three hours away from Severik, the half-way point between Orfa and Diarbekr. Under these circumstances we were glad to avail ourselves of the shelter afforded us by a Kurdish village. We had to grope our way into a dark room, off which branched other places in which were herded cattle, goats,