THE CRADLE OF MANKIND

LIFE IN EASTERN KURDISTAN



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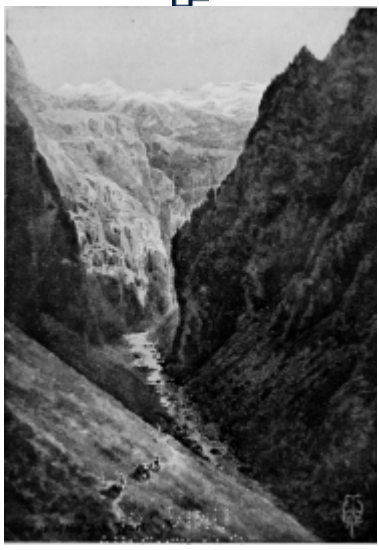
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THE CRADLE OF MANKIND

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THE RIVER OF EDEN.

(The Zab entering the Tyari Gorges).
The view down stream from the mouth of the Ori valley, a little above Tal. The distant snow peak is Ghara Dagh on the southern side of Tkhuma.

No. 1

THE CRADLE OF MANKIND

LIFE IN EASTERN

KURDISTAN

BY
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AND

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ILLUSTRATED FROM SKETCHES AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY
SIR EDGAR T. A. WIGRAM

SECOND EDITION.



A. & C. BLACK, Ltd.,
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1922

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The truth is, that ye ken naething about our hill country, or

Hielands as we ca' them. They're a kind of wild world by themselves, full of heights and howes, caverns, lochs, rivers and mountains, that it would tire the very deevil's wings to flee to the tap of them. And the folk are clean anither set frae the likes of huz; there's nae bailie-courts amang them—nae magistrates that dinna bear the sword in vain. Never another law hae they but the length of their dirks; the broad-sword's pursuer, and the target is defender, and the stoutest head bears langest out.

Sir Walter Scott
("Rob Roy")

NOTE TO SECOND EDITION

THE first sixteen chapters of this book were given to the public in the spring of the year 1914. Since that date the country has acquired an additional interest for Englishmen, owing to the British acceptance of a "mandate" for its supervision and also to the picturesque and heroic part played in the Great War by the "Assyrian" mountaineers.

While no attempt has been made to tell the full tale of

"England in Irak," it has been thought well to take the opportunity given by the appearance of a second edition, and to bring the story of the Assyrian nation up to the date of writing; and the facts which the two concluding chapters record have been collected and verified during a prolonged personal intercourse with the principal actors on the spot.

1922.

PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION.

It requires at least four persons to compound a salad sauce, say the Spaniards. The requisite incompatibilities can never co-exist in one. A spendthrift should squander the oil, and a miser dole out the vinegar. A wise man should dispense the salt, and a madman should do the stirring.

Similarly, it has been stated that it takes two people at least to write a book of travel; a newcomer to give the first impressions and an old resident to reveal the true inwardness of things.

Though the quality of the ingredients must remain of more importance than the proportions, the authors of the present volume hope that at least the latter are correct. One of the writers has spent but three months in the country, the other has lived there for ten years. One was quite ignorant of the East, and spoke no word of any Oriental language; the other had become so intimate with the tribesmen of his own locality, that they had even begun to tell him of their superstitions—the last secret that they ever disclose.

And the country itself possesses most intense and varied interest. It contains some of the grandest scenery, and some of the most venerable monuments in the world. It is the very *fons et origo* of our Indo-European ancestors. Its traditions connect it with the Garden of Eden, with Noah, and with Abraham. Its folk-lore preserves the old Nature-worship which originated in the brains of the Ape-man. Its

history records the very dawn of civilization, and the rise and fall of the earliest of the great empires. The every-day life of its present inhabitants is to this hour the life of the Patriarchs, the life of Europe in the Dark Ages, the life of the Highlands of Scotland in the days of Stewart Kings.

It is not an accessible country, even when judged by half-civilized standards. It is visited on sufferance only, even by its nominal rulers themselves. Fortune has given to the authors the opportunity of travelling through it, and of residing in it, and they have ventured to set down in these chapters the impressions it has left upon their minds.

The opportunity of residence in this country, it may be stated, came to one of the authors through his membership of the "Archbishop of Canterbury's Assyrian Mission." This Mission (which consists of five or six clergy of the Church of England) has been maintained in the district in question, by successive Archbishops, for a period of about twenty-five years. It exists at the request of the Patriarch and other authorities of the "Nestorian" or "Assyrian" Church, and it works with the object of educating the clergy and laity of that body, without disturbing them in their membership of their own ancient and interesting communion.

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THE CRADLE OF MANKIND

CHAPTER I

BEYOND THE PALE OF THE RAILWAY (ALEPPO AND URFA)

THE belated Jinn who emerged out of Suleiman's Brass Bottle into twentieth-century London found there, amid much that was strange to him, some beings of his own kin. These were the railway locomotives, obviously Jann like himself, but yet more oppressively treated; bound by spells of appalling potency to labours more arduous and wearisome than Suleiman had ever conceived.

And truly his blunder was plausible: for if Jann be extinct nowadays (which one doubts after visiting Asia), then assuredly cylinders and boilers are charged with the might of the Jann. They are set to work regularly now instead of rarely and spasmodically; and though they raise less dust and clamour their net output is considerably more. The slaves of the Lamp and the Ring developed intense explosive energy, but their effective radius was limited. They could rear Aladdin's palace in a night, or transport him to Africa in a twinkling; but these more domesticated Titans are capable of transmogrifying whole communities, and advancing the clock of progress five hundred years at a span.

And now the modern Magrabis, the busy Western magicians, have let slip these formidable Efrits against the City of Al Raschid himself: and one fine morning his

descendants will awake from the slumber of centuries to find themselves environed by a new heaven and a new earth.

The Baghdad railway has started. It has penetrated inland to Aleppo. "That great river, the river Euphrates," is bitted with its girders and caissons. One more stride[2] will carry it to Mosul across a country so open and even that it needs but the bedding of the sleepers; and a journey which now takes a fortnight will be accomplished in a ten-hour run. What is now a mere stagnant backwater will thus be suddenly scoured out by one of the main channels of the world's commerce; and who can venture to calculate the changes which will follow? Western reform will not convert the East any more than Alexander's conquests converted it; but it may evolve unintentionally some new sort of Frankenstein's Man.

But meanwhile the East waits unconscious. It takes no thought for the morrow. The shadow of coming events is perceived indeed, but not understood. As it was in the days of Noë, so in most things, it still continues: and the traveller of this generation may still find east of Aleppo those manners and customs unaltered, which the next may find clean swept away. Thus it is possible that some interest may attach to a desultory description of life as it is for the moment still enjoyed, or endured, in those regions; and which better ordered communities may perhaps find rather *bizarre*.

Aleppo, the present railhead, is a large Oriental city, lying pooled in a shallow depression round the great castle which dominates its roofs. It is beginning to show signs of Westernization; and the quarter nearest the railway station is blossoming with boulevards and hotels. But it is the returning, and not the outgoing, traveller who will be most struck by these symptoms. The latter will only be consumed with wonder that such a crude and guileless imitation should be thought to pass muster as the real

thing. Outwardly the place is being refurbished, and the new "Frank" houses flaunt themselves as bravely as their compeers around the *Soko* at Tangier; but within they are full of all Oriental uncleanness and discomfort, for the Turk is quite satisfied as soon as he gets veneered.

The major part of the town consists of narrow crooked and ill-paved streets, overhung on each side by toppling wooden oriels, which almost engage with each other like cogs across the road; and amid this maze of grimy alleys{3} lurk the mosques, the only noteworthy buildings, whose minarets show up prominently from a distance, but afford little guidance near at hand.

The great castle which dominates Aleppo occupies the flat summit of an immense mound, not much smaller than that of Corfe Castle, which is piled conspicuously upon a gentle eminence just within the confines of the city. The core of this mound may be natural, but the bulk of it is artificial; for it was originally one of the great High Places of that Baal worship which flourished pre-eminently in Northern Syria, and which has left us similar monuments of its dominion in the neighbouring mounds at Homs and Baalbek. The base of this mound is encircled by a deep dry moat, and its sloping sides are revetted with masonry; while its crest is crowned by the towers and walls which form the *enceinte* of the citadel, and access is provided at one end only through a most magnificent gate. The citadel owes its present form to Saladin, who is said to have employed as his workmen the captive Crusaders whom he had taken at the battle of Tiberias. There are some Western features in the building which give colour to this supposition; but the place was a notable stronghold long previous to Saladin's day.

Aleppo was one of the few fortresses that made a respectable defence against the Moslems at the time of their first irruption. None of the great frontier towns to the eastward,—Edessa, Amida and Dara—so much as stood a

real siege. Such was the bitterness of party strife, both civil and religious, within the Byzantine Empire at that period, that the Arab invaders were welcomed rather than resisted in these lands.

The citadel of Aleppo, however, was defended by a certain Youkinna, till even the redoubtable Caled, "the Sword of Allah," began to despair of success. Only the direct command of the Khalif Omar had induced him to persevere with the leaguer when a valiant slave named Dames volunteered to attempt a *coup de main*. Caled approved his design; and to favour its execution withdrew his forces to a distance. Thus Youkinna, rather too readily, assumed{4} that the siege was raised. The sentinels relaxed their vigilance, and the garrison had taken to carousing, when Dames with thirty companions crept up in the darkness to the walls. With the stalwart slave as their base they built up a human ladder, each man in succession clambering on to the shoulders of those below. The man on the seventh tier gripped the battlements, and scrambled over them, and then, letting down his turban, hauled up his associates one by one. Cutting down the few guards they encountered the Moslems then made for the gateway, and succeeded in gaining possession of it ere the garrison was fully aroused. Here they maintained themselves till daybreak when Caled arrived to relieve them, and Youkinna thereupon surrendered, seeing that further resistance was vain.

Aleppo accepted its fate and has since remained Mohammedan. The Byzantines did indeed temporarily recover it little more than three hundred years later, when the waning power of the Abbasside Khalifs enabled Nicephorus and Zimisces to push their armies almost to Baghdad. But this was a transitory conquest; a plundering raid rather than an occupation. The Greeks and Romans had always been alien intruders, and now their Asiatic provinces had reverted to Asia for good.

Another equally transitory raid left a more enduring impression—not indeed upon Aleppo in particular, but upon Mesopotamia at large. For in the year 1400 the country was visited by that most destructive of all conquerors, the terrible Timour the Tartar. He signalized his capture of Aleppo, as usual, by the erection of a gigantic pyramid of human heads; and (as was not unusual) he solaced himself while the pile was being reared by discussing theological problems with the learned doctors of the town. Poor wretches! they must have felt rather like a regiment of philosophers paraded for an interview with the Theban Sphinx; especially when their dangerous questioner opened proceedings with the bland inquiry, "Which are the true martyrs,—those who die fighting for me, or for my foes?" But fortunately they had an Oedipus among them who parried the thrust by quoting the words{5} of the Prophet, "All who die fighting for conscience' sake are martyrs, no matter under what ensign they fall."

The conquests of Timour may be regarded as closing the history of Mesopotamia; that first and most striking chapter in the history of the civilization of the world. Here mankind had first emerged from barbarism, and constructed the city of Babylon. Here had arisen the successive great empires that had their seats at Carchemish, at Nineveh, at Persepolis, at Seleucia-Ctesiphon, and at Antioch; and here after aeons of conquest and re-conquest there could yet arise the splendours of Baghdad. Invincibly fertile and populous the land still seemed able to revive after each successive devastation; but at last its power of recuperation was exhausted; and after Timour's day there is no more left to tell. Other conquerors had destroyed and rebuilt; but the Tartars were only destroyers. They razed the cities to the dust; they massacred every living creature; they demolished even the irrigation works that gave fertility to

the fields. And the desert which spreads to this day over all the plains to the eastward is, far more truly than his mausoleum at Samarcand, the monument of Timour the Lame.

Yet Aleppo itself was near enough to the sea to recover even from this disaster; and within 150 years of Timour's conquest it was once more one of the chief marts of the East. Hither came the London Turkey merchants, among them the "Master of the Tiger." Hither, with the Venetians, came Othello, to have his memorable encounter with the "heathen Turk." John Verney was trading here in the middle of the seventeenth century, and describes it as "the most famous city in all the Grand Seignior's dominions for the confluence of merchants of all nations." Among the commodities dealt with he enumerates the "oak galls for dyers" which are still a valuable harvest in the Kurdistan mountains; but he makes no mention of the liquorice, which is now the most important of all.

Aleppo owes its prosperity chiefly to the Arabs; for though, under the name of Berea, it was well known both to the Greeks and Romans, it never appears in their days{6} to have been a particularly important place. No doubt it profited by the decline of Antioch, which had been the second city in the Byzantine Empire. The new direct railway line to Iskanderun harbour will henceforth augment its importance; and when the completion of the Baghdad railway links it up with Constantinople and India it may even attain the position once held by Antioch itself.

Our own business at Aleppo was confined to the hire of a carriage to convey us and our baggage and our fortunes across the desert to Mosul. This was a subject which involved us in some three days' delicate diplomacy; and eventually we closed with a contractor who offered to take us through at the price of nine pounds for a nominal fortnight's journey,[1] with two mejidies (about seven shillings) extra for every day that we chose to call a halt.

The carriage in which we proposed to achieve our *hegira* consisted of a sort of four-wheeled coster's barrow, endowed with flea-like agility by a perfect cat's-cradle of springs. It had a seat in front for the driver, and a shelf behind on which our baggage could be corded; but there were no seats for the passengers, and accordingly we spread our sleeping bags upon a thick litter of straw. Most of the springs and many of the spokes had been broken and the fractures had been swathed in string. This required great quantities of string. Finally the tarpaulin tilt which enclosed the body of the vehicle (and which was ostensibly designed for shelter) proved useful for fielding the cargo whenever it got skied by the jolts. Such a carriage is known as "an *araba*," or alternatively as an *yaili*—a name which is probably onomatopœic, for it is about the "slithiest" thing that runs on wheels.[2]

This equipage was drawn by four scraggy ponies; not that it weighed anything worth mentioning, but because the roads were bad. Two of the beasts were harnessed to the pole, and two tacked on by traces outside, like the{7} team of a Homeric chariot. They could seldom be induced to trot, and generally our rate of progress fell even below the minimum that is ordinarily expected of "hollow jades of Asia"; for we cannot have averaged more than twenty miles a day. Our driver was a lank, dank, hook-nosed creature who reminded us irresistibly of Ikey Moses in the old Ally Sloper cartoons, and who looked as if he had been shipwrecked on a desert island a great many times and always in the same suit. He grumbled much at the amount of our baggage, and a great deal more because we insisted that he should carry a good supply of fodder; but we think that he—or at all events his horses—must eventually have felt grateful to us for not having given way.

The road, as it issues from Aleppo, rises gradually on to a heathy upland somewhat similar to Salisbury Plain. Here it soon becomes a mere wheel track—a good enough path

to lead to a moorland farmstead, but a poor sort of thing to confide in for a journey of 200 miles. At every two or three leagues its stages are marked off by villages; generally forlorn little groups of one-storied flat-roofed stone hovels, but sometimes a more pretentious affair where the houses rise to two stories and which (on the strength of such superiority) feels justified in calling itself a town. Often even the meanest of these were formerly towns indeed, and instead of being called El Bab or Membij, were known by such high-sounding names as Bambyce and Hierapolis.[3] The hummocks and hollows which mark the foundations of their ancient edifices form a wide margin all around the outskirts, and the surface is strewn for acre on acre with dislocated fragments of columns and great squared blocks of stone. At one point where we made a short halt, we were able to decipher a few tags of Latin inscriptions;—*cos*, *divi*, *cæsar* and a few other similar words. They were deeply, but rudely incised, as though cut in sheer idleness{8} by some unoccupied soldier. A householder who saw us examining them led us to the door of his hut where he showed us another inscription. In this case the lettering was Arabic, and we could read no more than the name of Allah:—a fact which caused great consternation to our householder, for he had been using it as a threshold.

We halted each night at some village *khan*, the Turkish synonym for the better known Persian word *caravanserai*, which forms the common house of entertainment both for man and beast. A typical *khan* consists of a great square courtyard full of foul dust in dry weather and of fouler mud in wet. Often have we felt inclined to bless the hard frost at night in winter time, which has enabled us next morning to walk to our carriage on the top of the mud instead of wading through. The courtyard is enclosed by a range of miserable hovels—the sort of shanties which might perhaps pass muster as tool sheds in allotment gardens, those “lodges in gardens of cucumbers,” which

Isaiah considered the nadir of dilapidation. Some of these take rank as stables and others as guest chambers. In point of comfort and cleanliness there is little to choose between them; but occasionally the guest chambers are on an upper story, and then the humans are somewhat better off than the brutes. Let us assume, not to be too sanguine, that our room will be on the ground floor; and, not to be too despondent, that we shall get a room to ourselves.

Such a room will be about 9 feet square, and will boast a ramshackle door and (perhaps) a shuttered window. Its floor will be about six inches below the level of the yard—we mean the mud. It will be furnished, like the Prophet's chamber, with "a bed, a stool, and a candlestick;" *videlicet* —with a rush mat or a rough plank bedstead, a small table (this only occasionally), and a paraffin lamp upon the wall. For a small additional fee the *Khanji*[4] will bring us a charcoal brazier; but (not wishing to be asphyxiated) we must leave this to burn outside until the blue flames subside.{9} Here we are at liberty to make our own beds, and to cook and eat such provisions as we may have brought with us. The room is never swept, and prudent travellers will often take the precaution of bringing their own carpet with them. The regular charge for such an apartment is five piastres (10*d.*) a night.

Our fellow guests are mostly Kurds or Arabs, with Syrians and Armenians rather more sparsely intermixed. They may be told apart by their languages, or less certainly by their dress; for the Arabs are the only folk hereabouts who adhere very scrupulously to their own distinctive costume. This consists of a gown, generally of some striped or plain soft-coloured material, reaching almost to the feet, and girt about the waist with a bright coloured sash. A V-shaped opening from neck to waist shows an embroidered shirt-front under, and over all is worn an *abba* or Arab cloak. The *abba* is generally of woollen fabric, either dark brown, or boldly striped with black and white

or brown and white in broad and narrow stripes arranged alternately. For winter wear it is often made of sheepskin, worn woolly side out during wet weather, and woolly side in during dry. On their heads they wear a bright coloured head cloth, either of silk or cotton, which is kept in position by a double coil of soft black rope forming a sort of wreath. They usually wear their hair long.

The Kurds also in the plain villages often wear an Arab type of costume; but the muleteers and other travellers are clad in a nondescript garb which seems based upon a Turkish original. The typical Turkish trousers are made from a piece of stuff whose width is equal to the length of the leg from waist to ankle. This is folded to form a square, sewn up the sides, and furnished with a cord run round the top to gird in at the waist. A couple of holes for the feet are cut at the two bottom corners, and the garment is then complete. This of course leaves an immense amount of slack between the legs, and superior tailors get rid of this to some extent by a certain amount of shaping; but a very sufficient surplus is always allowed to remain. Above this is worn a waistcoat, with a coloured sash and a kind{10} of zouave jacket. The waistcoat, the lappets of the jacket, and the pockets of the trousers are often adorned with braiding; and the rough frieze of which the dress is composed is generally blue, black or brown. Sheepskin jackets are often worn in winter time.

On their heads they wear sometimes an Arab head cloth, sometimes a Turkish fez, sometimes the conical felt cap of the Kurds and Syrians, either with or without a turban. In cold weather they swathe the ends of their turbans about their faces, muffling themselves up to the eyes and making themselves look even more complete ruffians than they did before.

The officials and well-to-do classes wear what they consider to be European costume, but always top it off with a fez.

One of the first impressions which besets a traveller in these parts is the reality of the curse of Babel. For a curse it is most emphatically, though some of our home-bred cranks would appear to regard it as a blessing; and it is devoutly to be wished that all those crack-brained politicians who are seeking to promote the revival of Erse and Gælic and Cymric might be awarded some practical experience of the realization of their dreams. The Swiss boasted that he had three native languages; but the inhabitants of Asiatic Turkey are provided with at least six. Arabic is dominant on the plains; Syriac and Kurdish in the mountains; Armenian on the plateaus to the northward; and Greek in western Asia Minor. Turkish, except in Anatolia, is only the official language; but we suppose it deserves recognition along with the other five. Naturally each of these main stems branches off into dialects by the score; and if these are to be reckoned separately the Turkish Empire is still as polyglot as that of Nebuchadnezzar himself.

No one of course speaks all the languages; but no one can get on at all comfortably without speaking a minimum of two. That number will probably enable him at least to find an interpreter in most of the villages which favour the four remaining tongues.{11}

The nationalities are as diverse as the languages, and are interwoven together in the most bewildering entanglement; not by separate districts dovetailed into one another like the pieces of a jig-saw puzzle, but by tiny fragmentary communities dispersed like different grains shaken up vigorously in a bag. The village is the largest unit; and where one village is Syrian, the next may be Kurdish, the next Armenian, the next Yezidi; all out of sympathy with each other and all resolutely refusing to mix. Here and there in the medley one may find occasionally a specimen which has no affinity whatever with any neighbouring nationality. Membij, for example, is a village of

Circassians, fugitives from the Russian occupation who were given an asylum here by the Sultan Abdul Hamid. We have sometimes wondered whether this extraordinary mixture may not be the fruit of the policy adopted by the ancient Assyrians, who were wont to disperse their captive nations through all the length and breadth of their domain; but the same thing is seen in the European provinces of Turkey where Assyrians and Persians never penetrated, and where Serbs, Bulgars, Greeks and Roumanians form an equally tangled skein.

English critics talk glibly enough of Turkey being an Asiatic Power, and being capable of regenerating herself by concentrating her energies in Asia. They seem to be under the delusion that Turkey in Asia is mainly inhabited by Turks! As a matter of fact (except as aforesaid, in Anatolia) one may live for years in Asiatic Turkey without so much as meeting a single Turk. Even the official classes are largely Circassians and Arnauts; and the bulk of the population are Arabs and Armenians and Syrians and Greeks and Kurds, all of whom are profoundly disaffected and only acquiesce in Turkish rule because they will on no account support each other in usurping its place.

The problem of Asiatic Turkey, like the problem of Thrace and Macedonia, is simply that none of the component races can be trusted to govern the rest, and that all are so inextricably intermingled that it is impossible to parcel them out into distinct homogeneous States. We must own some{12} sympathy with the Turks, the old conquering race, who once fully vindicated their hegemony. But their day is now past: their natural force abated. And though they still hold the tiller (thanks to the dissensions among their crew) they have no longer the strength to keep the ship under control. Their empire is too great for their shrunken numbers to govern, and they find themselves choked by the subject races with whom they have failed to assimilate.

On the third day after leaving Aleppo we reached the banks of the Euphrates; here a broad and rapid river, divided into three or four channels by a string of flat sandy islets. The right bank, from which we descended, is formed by a range of chalky hills breaking off into cliffs here and there; but the left bank is lower and flatter with an edging of conglomerate rock; and under each bank is a wide foreshore of greyish sand, which is of course all covered whenever the river is high. Its waters must have been singularly shrunken when Xenophon forded it at Thapsacus, a hundred miles lower down, and found it no more than breast deep; for here it is quite unfordable and can only be crossed by ferries.

The ferry boats are big spoon-shaped craft with low square bows and high pointed sterns. They are built of very rough planking, which looks as if it could not possibly be watertight, and some very vigorous caulking must have been employed to attain that end. They are steered by a huge flimsy paddle, formed of two or three poles roughly lashed together and pivoted upon the stern post; and what motive power is required is supplied by an iron-shod punt-pole. A crew of two men, one to steer and one to punt, work these unwieldy arks from a small half-deck at the stern.

Our carriage was backed into one of the boats over the bows, to the accompaniment of an infinity of yelling, and sundry mules and camels were disposed as packing round the sides. Then away we drifted, broadside on, down the rapid stream; wriggled into a back eddy under the lee of one of the islands; and eventually stranded safely about half a mile down upon the further shore. The boats had to{13} be towed up stream a mile or more before they were able to recross; and we were lucky to have found them on the right bank, for the process of getting them over might well have meant an hour's delay.

The point where we crossed the river is unmarked by

any village, but a considerable town named Birijik lies about thirty miles up stream.

A lordlier city once dominated these solitary reaches; for fifteen miles nearer lies the little village of Jerablus, and all around Jerablus lie the mighty mounds which cover the ruins of Carchemish, and among which the gangs of workmen employed by the British Museum are now engaged in recovering the long hidden secrets of the ancient Hittite kings. Carchemish was the capital of the Hittites, that most ancient and most mysterious of all the great nations which once held dominion over northern Syria. Their history is still a sealed book to us; for though we have recovered many of their inscriptions, we have as yet found no key to their decipherment. All that we know of them at present has been gleaned from the records of Egypt and Assyria. We are still awaiting the day when another Rosetta Stone shall unlock for us the secrets of a people, whose capital was already a dead city when Nebuchadnezzar defeated Pharaoh Necho under its walls 600 years before Christ.

But though the Hittites have vanished utterly for so many thousand years, we may still trace their influence in the handiwork of the natives to this day. The villages which border the Euphrates—and a few others nearer Aleppo—are entirely distinct in character from all those in the districts around. The houses are not square and flat-roofed like those in ordinary villages; but circular conical buildings, of a shape between a beehive and a sugar-loaf, built of sun-dried mud, and packed tightly together within a walled enclosure, looking exactly like the haycocks in a crowded rick-yard in England. Houses of precisely this shape are represented on the Egyptian bas-reliefs recording the conquest of the *Khati* by the Pharaoh Rameses II; and there can be little doubt that the type{14} has persisted continuously down to the present time. It may even perhaps be argued with a certain amount of plausibility

that the men who build such villages are remotely of Hittite blood!

The villages in Asiatic Turkey are ordinarily the property of some landowner; and the system of tenure is worth mentioning, for it must date from Patriarchal times. The Government claims as revenue an eighth of all the produce;[5] and the remaining seven-eighths is divided equally between the village owner and the cultivators. The villagers have also to pay to the Government an eighth of the value of the fodder computed to have been consumed by their flocks and herds; and have further to deliver the Government eighth free of charge at the tax-farmers' storehouses. By law this obligation is restricted to one hour's journey—*i.e.* there is supposed to be a storehouse in every village—but in practice they have often to carry it three or four times as far. They have also to pay a land tax of about 5 per cent. They keep all the straw as their perquisite; and it is the landlord's duty to provide them with the seed grain.

This sounds as if the landlord got the lion's share of the profits. And if he be miserly he does; but most of them interpret their signoral duties in a more liberal spirit. The landlord is expected to keep a guest house in his village, and a man in charge of it. Here anyone, be he villager or traveller, can get a free meal and free lodging. One big man in this district is reputed to expend food to the value of £1000 annually in such hospitality, including corn to the value of £400 in bread alone. Moreover, the landlord acts as a sort of savings bank to his villagers. If any of them is in distress and applies to him, he will relieve him. He will never think of sparing as long as his barns hold anything. He lives simply, as they do; and he holds that "Allah will provide."

All payments should be considered as being made in kind, not in money; for coin is scarce in Turkey, and not{15} very generally used.[6] Even if it were more

plentiful it is but a fluctuating security; for the coins in common use are the silver ones, and these are never current at their face value.[7] The gold £1 Turkish, nominally worth 100 piastres, fetched at the time of our visit from 102 piastres at Mosul to 114 at Aleppo; and the value of Mejidies (nominally 20 piastres), and of 5 piastre-pieces, varied also in different degrees. This is not all the fault of the Government; for while home trade and industry must be sorely hampered by such eccentricities, the Constantinople banks (which are run by European syndicates) are not altogether displeased. They can make a profit on the deal, for they hold most of the bullion: and when any particular coin has much appreciated anywhere, they can unload their stock of it at that particular place.

Eastward from the Euphrates our track leads over rather lower country, an open undulating heathland which melts gradually into alluvial plain. Here and there, dispersed about the surface, are wide patches of stony ground; and where the track chances to skirt them it is usually found that many of the stones have been piled up into little pillars, five or six one upon the other making a column about two feet high. Each patch will contain twenty or thirty of these little pillars. They are set up by casual wayfarers as a sort of votive memorial, just as the Patriarch Jacob set up his pillar at Bethel.

A similar habit prevails in the mountain districts; but there it is more customary to insert the votive stone in the forked branch of a tree. Cairns also are frequently seen at the sides of the paths in the mountains; but these are generally erected to mark the site of some murder, and it is usual for each passer-by to add his stone to the pile. If you were a friend of the victim you deposit your offering{16} gently; if you were his enemy you hurl it on vindictively. Thus the pile grows apace any way, and it is to be presumed that his *manes* are appeased.

Near the village of Seruj we reach the outskirts of the

great plain of Mesopotamia. Its levels stretch away southward as far as the eye can see. But our track edges still to the left and presently enters the hill country, the first and lowest undulations of the great mountain range towards the north.

It must have been on some of these spurs that the wrecks of Crassus' army found refuge after their great defeat by the Parthians in the year 53 B.C. Carrhae, which gave its name to the battle, lay in the midst of the plains some twenty-five miles to the southward, and the actual scene of the fighting was some distance further south still: but the beaten troops made for the mountains, their only asylum from their pursuers; and here the last cohorts were surrounded and forced to lay down their arms.

Carrhae was a place of ill-omen for the Romans, for only 300 years later another similar disaster befell them upon the same ground. Here in the year 260 the Emperor Valerian was defeated and captured by Sapor I, the King of the Sassanid Persians, who had by this time inherited the Arascid Parthians' domains. Roman accounts assert that the hapless Emperor was flayed alive; but the Persians more credibly relate that he was kept a prisoner, and employed in building the great bridge across the Karun river at Shushter.[8] Both accounts agree that after his death his skin was stuffed, and preserved as a grim trophy in the Palace at Seleucia Ctesiphon.

A short distance within the hills our track struck the great metalled road that runs from Birijik to Urfa. It is a road which, as far as it goes, might be called good in any country: but only the Urfa half of it is completed; it comes to an untimely end not far from the point where we struck at, which was somewhere about a third of the way to Birijik. The remaining section, however, served us admirably, and{17} we trundled along it in fine style for the last three hours of our day's journey, threading a winding rocky valley which debouched at the back of the town.

Oriental cities as a rule are rather a disappointment to sightseers. Picturesque they are indeed, but in such a squalid fashion that much of their charm is blighted. They are a mere agglomeration of hovels, with a few fine features here and there. We have even heard it said of Constantinople itself that, having seen the approach to the Golden Horn, the traveller had better take his departure; for that every nearer inspection brings a fresh disillusionment in its train. Urfa, however, may rank as one of the exceptions. It is beyond question the most picturesque city in Mesopotamia. And, being built chiefly of stone, it has some dignity in its dilapidation, and wears its tattered finery with an aristocratic air.

Urfa lies just at the foot of the hills, half enclosed by two bold limestone promontories. The upper part of the town is pooled in the bay between them, and the lower and larger portion is split out into the plain. It is almost surrounded by its ancient walls, which are largely of Roman workmanship; and its mosques and minarets and all its prominent buildings are constructed almost entirely of a rich golden-brown stone. The streets are of course mere alleys, narrow and tortuous; but retain here and there many traces of architectural ornamentation; and among and around the houses grow cypresses and other trees. The principal mosque, once a Christian cathedral, is an old Byzantine basilica, and above it rises conspicuously a noble octagonal tower. The present Armenian church is also of great antiquity, though hardly of the First Century, which is what the Armenians claim.[9]

The promontory to the west of the town is crowned by the ancient citadel; now a mere shell, but imposing from{18} its situation, and surmounted by two lofty Roman columns formerly a portion of a temple portico.[10] Towards the town the hill is precipitous, but on the further side the slope is gradual; and accordingly the whole of this face, together with the two return ends, is defended by one

of the most magnificent dry moats that exists anywhere in the world. It is hewn out of solid rock, with sides that are absolutely vertical; and may measure even now about thirty feet deep and not less than thirty feet wide. Formerly it could be crossed at two or three places by narrow wooden drawbridges; and the posterns to which they gave access can still be seen in the walls. At what epoch this moat was constructed we did not feel competent to determine. The walls are partly Saracenic, partly Roman, and partly Sassanian; they are now extremely ruinous and of no very formidable height.[11]

Urfa in classical days was known by the name of Edessa, and was the capital city of that king Abgarus of Osroëne, whose Epistle to our Lord is included among the Apocryphal Gospels. This tale is something more than a legend, for it dates from the beginning of the fourth century; and is related by the historians Eusebius and Moses of Khorene, who both profess to have derived their authority from contemporary documents which they had themselves inspected among the royal archives at Edessa. They tell us how the king was afflicted with leprosy, and how he sought in vain to be cured by the physicians and sorcerers of his own land. How at length he heard report of the miracles that were being wrought in Judaea by Jesus the{19} Prophet of Galilee; and how he dispatched ambassadors to Him, entreating Him to come and heal his disease and to instruct his people, offering Him at the same time a secure asylum from the hatred of the unbelieving Jews. These ambassadors were the “certain Greeks”[12] who are mentioned in St. John’s Gospel as having been introduced to our Lord by Philip on the day of His triumphant entry into Jerusalem; and they brought back to Abgarus a verbal message (or some say an actual letter dictated by our Lord to Thomas) promising that one of His Apostles should be sent to Edessa in due time.

Accordingly soon after the Ascension the Apostle

Thaddeus was sent by Thomas to preach the Word in Osroëne. He came and healed Abgarus of his leprosy; and the king and all his people thereupon embraced the Faith. [13] Thaddeus himself passed onwards to Armenia and Eastern Mesopotamia, where he founded the Parthian or Assyrian, now called the "Nestorian," Church.

We may at least say of this legend that it is nearly as well authenticated as that which attributes the foundation of the Church of Rome to Peter; and far better than those which claim Spain for James the Great, or Britain for Joseph of Arimathea. The stories have this much in their favour—that at all events they are not mutually contradictory. Peter and James are conceded to the West; while Eastern tradition contents itself with Thomas and Thaddeus and Bartholomew. One would expect only the illustrious names in any mere fabricated tales.

At least it is historically certain that the Gospel was brought to Edessa almost within the Apostolic ages; and that Edessa formed the main distributing centre for the preachers who evangelized the East.

Osroëne in Abgarus' days formed a sort of buffer state{20} between the Parthian and Roman Empires; and a little later it experienced the usual fate of buffer states, and was absorbed by the Empire of Rome. Under its new suzerains Edessa took rank as an important frontier fortress, and stood many a siege in the long-drawn wars between the kings of the Sassanid Persians and the Emperors of Byzantine Rome. Moreover it was a great educational centre, the seat of a famous university, which was eventually suppressed by the Byzantine Emperor Zeno in the year 489 on the ground that it was tainted by the heresy of Nestorianism.

But Edessa has acquired one peculiar interest in the eyes of Western historians from the fact that it was the easternmost conquest that was ever achieved by the Crusades. When Godfrey de Bouillon reached Antioch in

the year 1097 his brother Baldwin was in command of one of the divisional armies that sallied forth to raid the country round about. Many of the Crusading chieftains won themselves little principalities in the course of these plundering expeditions; but Baldwin had better luck than any, though it does not appear that it was any better deserved. He penetrated eastward to Edessa; and found that city governed by a petty Christian kinglet, who welcomed the Crusaders effusively and adopted Baldwin as his successor. How far such welcome and adoption were voluntary we have no means of ascertaining. Probably the poor Christian Emir felt that he could not help himself. At any rate, he was killed soon after in an insurrection (not without suspicion of Baldwin's connivance), and the latter reigned in his room.

Upon Godfrey's death in 1100, Baldwin became King of Jerusalem, and made over his principality to his cousin Baldwin du Bourg. He, too, succeeded to Jerusalem in his turn in 1118; and the next Count of Edessa was Jocelyn, a fine old fighter, whose exploits made his name a terror to every Paynim in the land. Neither Baldwin II nor Jocelyn were altogether in luck's way. Both were taken captive near Edessa by Balak the Prince of Aleppo, and confined together in the strong castle of Khortbert. Jocelyn succeeded{21} in escaping, and presently had the satisfaction of slaying Balak in battle with his own hand: but Baldwin remained a prisoner for a period of seven years.

Jocelyn died in 1132, leaving his feeble-spirited son to succeed him,[14] and thereafter the fortunes of the Crusaders began very rapidly to wane. Their first invasion had been happily timed; for the last great Seljuk Sultan, Malek Shah, had died two or three years previously, and had left his empire to be disputed among his four sons. Thus for a time there had been no single great ruler to unite the Moslems against the Christians. But now a new power

was being built up by Zanghi the Atabek at Mosul; and under him, and his successors Noureddin and Saladin, it grew more formidable every year. Zanghi—Sanguin, as the Crusaders called him—laid siege to Edessa in 1144, and Milicent the queen regent of Jerusalem found herself powerless to send aid. Zanghi breached the walls by undermining one of the towers; the stormers overtook the flying garrison before they could enter the citadel; and an indiscriminate massacre brought the Christian dominion to an end.

There are still a good number of Christians both Armenian and Syrian at Urfa, and the Syrian Monastery of Rabban Ephrem stands conspicuously at the head of the bay. Rabban Ephrem was a handsome young monk, a refugee from Nisibis when that city was ceded to Persia. He came to Urfa in search of an eligible hermitage, and encountered there (so says the legend) a damsel with roguish eyes.

"Oh damsel, why dost thou look upon me?" demanded the scandalized solitary. "Man should keep his eyes fixed on the ground; for it is written that out of it he was taken."

"Verily it is as thou sayest;" responded the damsel demurely. "Wherefore woman may look upon man freely, for it is written that woman was taken out of man."

"Lo! here is wisdom indeed," exclaimed the anchorite in amazement. "If the women of Urfa are so wise, how{22} wise must the men be! Of a surety I will make my abode here, and gather wisdom at the fountain head."

So Rabban Ephrem settled down at Urfa, probably in one of the rock-cut cells in the hill fronting the castle. But as he was misguided enough to exclude all the women from his monastery, we fear it is only too probable that he did not get as much wisdom as he hoped.

But the real patron saint of Urfa is no other than the Patriarch Abraham; for the Moslems all believe implicitly

that Urfa is Ur of the Chaldees.[15] They have here Abraham's cradle, and his tomb (which they never allow Christians to look upon); and they have the Pool of Abraham also, which is the principal sight in all their town.

Abraham's Pool is a great stone tank which is fed by a never-failing spring. Along one side rise the domes and minarets of Abraham's Mosque (which is also inviolable by Christians) and the steps by which pious Moslems descend into the Pool to bathe. In the pool live Abraham's carp. The water is positively thick with them. No one is permitted to catch them so long as they remain in their Sanctuary; but they venture at their own proper peril into the stream which flows out from one end. It is considered a pious act to feed them; and the great fat gluttons follow us as we walk along the margin, with their heads bobbing out of the water, begging for handfuls of boiled maize. When we throw them *largesse* there is such a rush for it that many of them got hoisted bodily out of their element on their fellows' backs; and it must be regretfully added that they often gorge themselves so immoderately that they float{23} away gasping, belly uppermost, as though they were in an apoplectic fit.

Abraham's interest in the pool is explained by a delicious legend. He had refused to worship fire when ordered to do so by Nimrod; and the mighty conqueror was so exasperated that he hurled him with his own hands from the summit of the citadel rock into a burning fiery furnace which he had kindled for his reception at the bottom. The Patriarch dropped unhurt, though it was a long cast even for Nimrod; and the fountain sprang up at the touch of his feet and extinguished the fiery furnace.

If this explanation should appear to be not quite sufficiently coherent, we can only admit that primitive Paganism tells a much more plausible tale. The pool belonged of old to Derceto (Dagon, Atergatis), the ancient Syrian fish-goddess. They are lineal descendants of her

carp that inhabit its waters to this day.{24}

CHAPTER II

A LAND OF DUST AND ASHES

(DIARBEKR AND MARDIN)

DUE east and west, from the Gulf of Iskanderun almost to the heel of the Caspian, there stretches a range of lofty mountains—a sort of natural bulwark, fencing off the high rugged plateau of Asia Minor on the north from the low level plain of Mesopotamia on the south. At its western extremity this range is known as the Taurus, but further east it appears now to possess no generic name; yet it well deserves so much distinction, for it is here that the peaks attain their highest altitude, and hold in their wild recesses some of the grandest scenery in the world.

The hills which we entered near Urfa are the first outposts of these mountains, but at this point of their line the outposts are very far advanced. We must push on for two or three days across a broad undulating upland before we find ourselves approaching the foot of the main chain itself. On the whole it is a dull enough journey; for though the snow summits rise nobly on the horizon ahead of us, the heathlands immediately round us are as barren as land can be. There are a few sordid Kurdish villages at four or five hours intervals, but apart from these there is nothing for the eye to rest on; and our own little party, crawling slowly across the landscape, seem to be the only living creatures except the ubiquitous hooded crows.

During the second day, however, we became aware of another feature, which, if it adds no beauty, at least lends interest to the scene. A layer of higher ground is thrust across the plateau. It radiates out into long flat tongues;

and its steep escarpments are littered all over with the big{25} black boulders that have fallen from the bristly fringe along the upper edge. These boulders are covered with a grey-green lichen, and mottled with patches of moss of a warmer and richer green; but no other kind of vegetation seems able to flourish among them, and the prevailing tone of the landscape is a gloomy bilious grey. To those who have seen it before such a picture needs no commentary. A vast outpouring of volcanic scoriæ has covered the whole countryside.

As we pursue our way further the signs become yet more pronounced. The Acropolis of the little town of Severek is perched, like Bamborough Castle, on a platform of basalt rock. Not far off at the village of Kainak is an isolated cone —once doubtless a miniature crater: and we remember that Diarbekr is built of basalt also—Diarbekr, two days' journey away. Whence came this prodigious outflow of seventy miles in diameter, and of four thousand square miles in area—as large as the county of York?

A full day's journey ahead of us, all along the eastern horizon, lies a huge squat bun-shaped mountain, just over 6000 feet high. This is Karaja Dagh, the great extinct volcano, the outermost of that group of volcanoes which lie to the north of Mesopotamia, in Armenia and eastern Kurdistan. This region must have been the scene, at some remote geological epoch, of some of the greatest eruptions that have ever occurred on this globe. The five huge craters which produced them (not to mention a host of smaller ones)[16] are ranged diagonally athwart the country in a line some 300 miles long. At the north-eastern end is Alageuz, 150 miles south of the Caucasus. Then come Ararat, Sipan, and Nimrud; with Karaja at the south-western end. The biggest of all perhaps was Nimrud, a mountain but little higher than Karaja, but possessing the third largest crater that is known to exist in the world. Karaja would seem to consist of a group of associated{26}

craters; something like the Puy de Dome mountains, but infinitely grander in scale.

It is held by many commentators that the site of the Garden of Eden was near modern Van and Bitlis, round about the head waters of the Euphrates, the Tigris, the Araxes, and the Zab. If so, then the Garden of Eden now lies buried beneath the lava of these volcanoes; and where could we find fitter antitypes of the Cherubim with the flaming swords?

Karaja juts out towards the plains like a huge cape, isolated from the mountains; and our road slowly heaves itself upward to find a way over its tail. As a road it is incredibly villainous, for it takes the basalt boulders *au naturel*, and hardly an attempt has been made anywhereto form a surface at all.[17] Round our left sweep the desolate fields of broken and disintegrating lava. On our right they rise, terrace on terrace, toward the mountain from which they flowed. And as we leave the mountain behind, and continue our way to the eastward, the aspect of the country changes little: it is still lava that surrounds us on every side.

At length, two full days beyond Severek, we descry a city ahead of us. A city notable for its size, and yet more for its menacing aspect:—a grim black row of massive towers and curtains, with the slender stems of a dozen minarets shooting up into the sky behind the ramparts like reeds behind a dyke of stone. The snow peaks on our left stretch beyond it, and fade off gradually into the distance; and as we draw nearer we perceive that on our right the town is guarded by the deep ravine of the Tigris. Such is Diarbekr—Black Amida; whose classical name is not yet disused entirely, and which owes its inseparable epithet to the basalt of which it is built.

The city crowns a bold rocky bluff overhanging the gorge of the Tigris, which flows some 300 feet beneath it in a broad and sandy bed. The river is here wide and deep,

and its{27} modern name—*Shat*, the Arrow—testifies the rapidity of its current; but a little below the city its course is checked by a bridge and a weir. In the severe winter of 1910-11 it was frozen over so hard at this point that the caravans of camels were able to cross it on the ice. The river covers the eastern face of the city; and the ground falls fairly steeply along the southern face also. But toward the remaining two faces the approaches are over level ground.

We possess many cities in Europe which are still entirely encircled by Roman or mediæval ramparts. Such are Carcassonne, Aigues Mortes, Avila, Lugo, and Rothenburg; and we may add Constantinople, though in this case the circuit is incomplete. But, having seen all these examples, we feel bound to put it on record that the basalt walls of Diarbekr are distinctly the finest of all. The walls are some forty feet high and about five miles in circuit, and are strengthened at frequent intervals by eighty massive towers. Most of these are semicircular, but some are semioctagonal. They are spaced about three and a half diameters apart, and project boldly from the curtain walls between. The line traced by the walls is irregular, skirting the edges of the hollows; and at each salient angle is a huge circular bastion. The gateways are somewhat insignificant, being mere holes in the walls flanked by a tower on either side: and this is characteristic of most Roman fortifications, the gateways of Lugo (for instance) being very similar in design.[18]

The curtain walls are from ten to fifteen feet thick; thinner along the river front, where the precipitous basalt cliffs rendered assault almost impracticable; and thicker along the other three sides. These sides are further protected by a moat cut in the solid rock, but neither so deep nor so wide as the giant moat at Urfa. Along the inner edge of this moat, some paces from the base of the ramparts, is a low breastwork of masonry as at

Constantinople and Carcassonne. A loopholed and vaulted gallery is carried{28} along the top of the ramparts, and above this were the battlements, so that the defenders had a double banquette.[19] The towers are vaulted internally, and have double banquettes also; and the garrison could reach their stations by a double staircase at every tower. The citadel is at the north east corner overhanging the gorge of the river, and in the midst of it is a huge mass of masonry, once the mount of the demolished keep.

The walls are beyond all doubt, in the main, of Roman construction; though some Saracenic additions have since been incorporated in the work. They are built of squared black basalt, which has weathered externally to a dull yellow tone owing to the lichen which has overspread the surface. Possibly this process was assisted by the fact that some twenty years ago it was deemed a good idea to whitewash them, in order to give a distinguished welcome to a specially prominent Pasha! But fortunately the traces of this sacrilege are almost obliterated now.

The houses in the town for the most part are a set of squalid hovels, intersected in all directions by a maze of narrow crooked streets. Our carriage fairly stuck in one of these alleys as we were attempting to pass through it; and for some minutes it seemed problematical whether we should be able to wriggle free. Yet not all the houses are mean; and in the quarter near the citadel, the residence of the chief officials, a very considerable number are solidly constructed of stone. Some few of these are genuinely old, and possess a good deal of interest. They are often built in two colours, with alternate horizontal bands of black basalt and yellow marble, resembling not a little the black and white marble buildings of Pistoia. It is curious how this taste for coloured ornamentation seems inherent in the dwellers in volcanic districts, where materials of different colours are always readily available. The same trait is very conspicuous in the volcanic districts of Auvergne. The

most notable example at Diarbekr is a big mansion in{29} the main thoroughfare. A house very similar in type to the old palaces of Spain and Italy; bare, square and prison-like outside, and entered by a single great doorway; but with graceful arcaded porticoes surrounding the *patio* within. Once, no doubt, it was indeed a palace, the abode of some prominent magnate: but now it is only a *khan*; and a *khan* so notoriously filthy that even our *Arabaji* shrank from an encounter with its fleas.

The principal Mosque is also of peculiar interest, and presents an architectural problem which has never been quite fully solved. Two sides of its courtyard are formed by the façades of an ancient palace—a palace of regal dimensions, and constructed in a style that is admittedly unique. One of these façades is in two stories, with a pointed arcade below and square-headed windows over; the other has now but one story which consists of a pointed arcade.[20] These are not quite Romanesque in style, but more Romanesque than Oriental. They are rather like primitive versions of the Otto Heinrichs Bau at Heidelberg Schloss. But the building to which they are nearest akin is Diocletian's famous palace at Spalatro; albeit they are far less massive, and far more fantastically ornate. The theory most generally adopted concerning them is that they formed part of the palace of the Armenian king, Tiridates; and this theory is strongly supported by their resemblance to the palace at Spalatro, for Diocletian and Tiridates were contemporaries and close allies.

Amida was one of the great fortresses that guarded the southern frontier of the Roman Empire. Northward, in Asia Minor, *Pax Romana* had a fairly long innings; but Parthia and Persia to the southward were at no time definitely subdued. The hold of the Romans on Mesopotamia was indeed in some sort analogous to the hold of the Austrians on Italy previous to 1860. They regarded it as within their "Sphere of Influence," and sometimes they judged it

expedient to "assert their interests" by invading it. But generally they found that enterprise was a bit{30} beyond their capacity; their real "Scientific Frontier" lay along the mountains in the north. And here they, too, maintained their four great fortresses; not ranged in a square like the famous Austrian Quadrilateral, but *en échelon* one behind the other along the southern slopes of the hills. Nisibis and Daras were in the forefront; Amida and Edessa withheld in reserve behind them. And though thus in the second rank, Amida got its full share of fighting when the kings of resuscitated Persia began to make invasions in their turn.

Amida's defences were perfected, and its arsenal formed, by Constantius; and it was Constantius' great opponent Sapor II who undertook its first memorable siege. The great Sassanid Shah invaded the Roman territory with a huge army of 100,000 men in the year 360. He had at first intended to ignore the fortresses and to scour the hinterland for plunder; but as he rode past the walls of Amida an arrow struck his helmet, and he turned upon the place like an angry bull. His summons was answered by a volley from the *balistæ* which slew the only son of his chief auxiliary, Grumbates the king of the Chionites; and Sapor swore to the bereaved father that he would not rest till he had taken the city in revenge.

For seventy-three days he pressed his assaults with the utmost fury and persistence. He brought up battering rams and huge wooden towers constructed for him by Roman deserters; and on one occasion he succeeded in surprising one of the towers upon the river frontage, but the seventy picked archers who occupied it were overwhelmed by the garrison and slain. At last he breached the walls; and though some of the garrison (including the historian Ammianus) cut their way through his lines on the further side, and thus succeeded in escaping, the rest, with all the inhabitants, were massacred in the ensuing storm.

Yet Amida had at least performed the duty which is

ordinarily expected of a fortress. It had held back the tide of invasion for the period of a whole campaign. Sapor had lost a third of his army; and the season was too far{31} advanced for any further operations. He retreated again into Persia, and abandoned the city that he had won.

An even more notable siege occurred in the year 502. King Kobad, the father of the yet mightier Chosroes I. invested the city that autumn; assailing it from the western side (as Sapor had done before him), and employing similar siege engines to those of his predecessor's days.[21] The garrison caught the blows of his rams on reed mattresses lowered from the ramparts, and greased the drawbridges of his wooden towers so effectively that the stormers could not cross. Also they employed "winged words" of such singular virulence and pungency as to scandalize even their own historian.[22] He felt obliged to draw the line at "Lime-house," though boiling oil and firebrands were fair. "If the bishop had still been alive he would never have permitted it;" and indeed when the women took to stripping themselves on the ramparts, and taunting the besiegers with their inability to sack the place, we may grant that any bishop would have had good cause to protest!

Kobad next "cast a mount" against the walls in the manner of Sargon and Sennacherib; a huge incline of earth and brushwood to give his men access to the parapet. The besieged breached their own wall under it, and secretly drew away the core; propping the cavity with balks of timber, and then filling it with combustibles. When the assault began they fired their mine; and an hour or two later the mound collapsed beneath the feet of the attacking columns, precipitating the luckless stormers into the blazing furnace below.[23]

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Three months had passed in vain assaults, and Kobad had made no progress. His thinly clad Persians were

suffering terribly from the winter cold; and the Great King swallowed his dignity and offered to raise the siege for half a crown! But success had made the defenders more insolent than ever, and they scorned even this show of homage. They retaliated by sending him a bill for the vegetables which his army had consumed out of their gardens. This was too much for Kobad, and he resolved to fight to a finish. Three days later the laugh was on his side.

One night a party of Persians were pursuing a certain Kutrigo who had sallied from a privy postern to make a raid on their camp. As they neared the walls they received no challenge, and not an arrow was shot at them. That particular tower was manned by the "Sleepless" monks of Anzetene; and it chanced that "a certain man" (in the most friendly spirit) had given them a good supper and wine to drink, so that they were all in deep slumber. The Persians seized their opportunity and made themselves masters of the tower. The garrison were aroused and hurried up to expel them, endeavouring to cut away the vaulted floor under their feet. The Persians planted their scaling ladders and swarmed to the help of their comrades; and for thirty-six hours continuously the fight raged furiously on the wall. Peter of Amkhoro, a man of gigantic stature and clad in complete armour, held the banquette on one side against the utmost efforts of the Persians: but in the opposite direction they pushed on from tower to tower till at last they gained one of the gateways. The army poured in irresistibly, and the massacre began.

Kobad allowed his army three full days to sack the city, and at the end of that time 80,000 corpses were carried out through the north gate that the king might enter at the south. Even so the Persians' vengeance was not sated, and they demanded leave from their king to execute one tenth of the survivors to appease the *manes* of their own dead comrades.[24] They bore these wretched victims{33} outside the city walls, and killed them "in all sorts of ways."



MOSUL.

View from the bridge, looking up stream. The Tomb of Cassim is one of the more distant buildings near the water-side.

Kobad pillaged the city thoroughly, sending his booty away on rafts down the Tigris to Ctesiphon; and when he himself departed, he left a certain Glon to hold the fortress with a garrison of 3000 men. This seems a small enough force to man such an extent of rampart: yet at first it proved amply sufficient; and when the Roman general Patricius attempted to regain the city he was repulsed completely and ignominiously, though the Romans were much more skilled than the Persians in the conduct of a siege. But Amida was not yet at the end of its agony: and what all the emperor's horses and all the emperor's men had so conspicuously failed to accomplish was reserved for the grim persistence of an irregular partisan.

Farzman was an active local Sheikh who had espoused the cause of the Romans, and who had made his name a terror to the Persians by a multitude of daring deeds. He was only in command of 500 horse; and any attempt to form a regular siege of such a first-class fortress would of course have been ridiculous. But an adroitly handled cavalry force can do a good deal in the way of "containing" an Oriental city. In the winter of 1911 Shuja ed Dowleh, the Agha of Maragha, nearly reduced Tabriz,

with all its 300,000 inhabitants, with an equally puny band.

Farzman knew full well that the Persians in Amida could not have had time to replenish their magazines. He quietly cut off communication with the surrounding villages, and suppressed the daily market that was held without the walls. Glon very naturally grew restive; and listened greedily to a certain Gadono, a prominent local sportsman, who told him that he had located Farzman's camp in the course of his hunting excursions, and would enable him to take it by surprise. Accordingly Glon sallied out with all his available cavalry. But the wily Gadono had been in communication with Farzman. The "surprise" had been all arranged beforehand; and Glon and his party were wiped out.

This signal miscarriage of their "aggressive defence"{34} profoundly disconcerted the Persians. Glon's son, now in chief command, kept breathing out threatenings and slaughter; but he no longer had any cavalry, and his infantry was barely sufficient to man the ramparts and overawe the citizens within. He shut up all the able-bodied inhabitants, to the number of 10,000, in the Stadium; and calculated by this measure to free his own hands for the defence. But, struggle as he might, he could not snap the line which held him:—Farzman had hooked a salmon with a trout rod, but he played it in masterly style.

Then came days of horror unutterable. The prisoners in the Stadium were left without any food whatever. They ate their boots, and their belts, and finally preyed on each other; and when the wretched survivors were let loose as no longer worth guarding, they crawled out of their prison "like men risen from the dead." By this time the city itself was almost in equal extremity. Many of the living skeletons from the Stadium were enticed into the houses by the starving women and there killed and devoured. The garrison were so reduced by hunger that they could scarcely carry their weapons; and the Persian commandant

sent to Farzman to say that he was willing to capitulate.

Farzman granted easy terms. They might go off on rafts down the Tigris, taking all their property with them, as many as elected to go. And he himself, on their departure, took possession of that ghastly charnel house; and assisted by the new bishop, Thomas (the same who was later to build Daras), set to work to import new inhabitants, and nurse the dead city back to life.

Diarbekr in 1895 was one of the centres of the Armenian massacres, and as many as 2500 perished in this place alone. Little enough was heard about it at the time in England, where attention was almost monopolized by yet more monstrous holocausts; but what passed then as a mere local incident wears a very different aspect when we visit the actual spot where it was enacted—when we see the doors still splintered and patched in the houses which were stormed by the rioters, the photographs of the luckless victims still treasured in the albums of their surviving friends and{35} relatives, and the ghastly bald patch in the midst of the city where the Armenian quarter was razed to the ground and has never been re-erected to this day.

The massacre was undoubtedly prompted by the Government of Constantinople; but their agents were the fanatical Kurds who swarm in the slums of Diarbekr, and who flocked in eagerly from the surrounding villages to take a hand in the work of slaughter and to share in the plunder which followed. That the massacre was political and not religious was proved by the fact that the Syrian Christians (who are also numerous in Diarbekr) did not suffer to anything like the same extent as their Armenian co-religionists. The crowd of refugees who sought sanctuary in the Jacobite cathedral were not molested, and only isolated individuals fell victims to the fury of the mob. That the outbreak wore a mask of fanaticism was a thing inevitable in the Orient. The perpetrators were the

Kurdish riff-raff; and on this point Mohammedan *badmashes* are alike all over the world. Only religious zeal can excite their passions dangerously; and when their passions are dangerously excited they always find expression in religious zeal.[25] But the very fact that a distinction was made between Armenians and Syrians, is alone sufficient to indicate that in this instance the mob was under some sort of control.

The hatred of the Turks for the Armenians is due to the fact that the Armenians are the only one of their subject nations of whom the Turks are afraid. The Arabs and Kurds are their co-religionists, and have no national cohesion. The Nestorian and Jacobite Syrians are either too few to be dangerous, or too thoroughly tamed by long subjection to have any desire to rebel. But the Armenians are numerous and imbued with national aspirations; and though the majority of them are inoffensive cultivators,{36} they include a considerable number of intelligent and capable men. A small percentage too are active political propagandists, who continue to work persistently to overthrow the present régime. Under equal political conditions the Armenians would soon secure dominance: and this would be a subversal which the Turks could never endure. So when the Armenians grow restive the Turks resolve to "take precautions." They cannot cope with them in cleverness, but in physical force they can.

Will there be further massacres? It is an ever-present danger. The Turks do not wish it—it makes trouble with the European Embassies; and, after all, slaughtering the Armenians is killing the goose that lays the golden eggs. The Kurdish chiefs do not wish it either, for they too stand to lose pecuniarily: but beneath them seethes the fanatical mob, easily roused by hot-headed agitators, a sort of open powder magazine which any stray firebrand may ignite. "I will give you full warning if I can," said a friendly Vali to a gentleman of our acquaintance; "but I can only tell you

that I see no danger just now. There is talk of course—there is always talk; and so long as the talk reaches our ears it is not likely to go further. When you see little groups whispering together outside the mosques, and breaking up whenever a Christian passes within earshot—that is the real danger-signal, and you can see that as well as I."

There was plenty of "talk" at Diarbekr; and we frequently heard the children (no doubt in imitation of their elders) invoking curses on us as we passed along the streets. The tension must have become greater since: for the Moslems will have been touched in the raw at the result of the Balkan fighting, and are prone to avenge their discomfiture on any Christian who is ready to hand. Moreover the Constitution had not altogether improved matters: for it was inaugurated by a general amnesty whereby all exiles and prisoners had been released. Some were certainly innocent sufferers, but a large number would have been much better kept in durance; and Diarbekr was consequently growing anxious at the intrigues of Abdul Reshek Agha, grandson and heir to Bedr Khan Beg of Massacre{37} memory,[26] who had just got reinstated in his ancestral stronghold in Bohtan. He was credited with an ambition to establish himself under the ægis of the Russians, as Shah of United Kurdistan: and though a "United Kurdistan" is a sufficiently Utopian conception, such an attempt might well begin with an Armenian massacre, and bring Russian intervention in its train.

The old régime used to deal with such dangers tactfully, if not altogether discreetly, according to our insular ideas. And this may be exemplified by the case of another Bedr Khan Beg, a scion of the same family—a tale which, if not *vero*, is so *ben trovato* that we cannot refrain from quoting it; and which at least shows the sort of methods with which the Government was credited, and in which its liege

subjects were quite disposed to acquiesce.

The Sultan, in an expansive mood, had recalled Bedr Khan Beg from exile, and proposed to re-invest him with part of his ancestral domain. That gratified gentleman blossomed out luxuriantly under such sympathetic usage, and began asking for all sorts of powers and privileges, and reviving a whole host of dormant claims. The Government grew rather uneasy, but showed no signs of displeasure. It granted each demand in turn; escorted him with high distinction on board a warship; and dispatched him to Trebizond en route for his satrapy.

Two days later the ship was back at its anchorage. Perhaps it had forgotten something. Perhaps it needed some repairs to its engines. But it seemed in no hurry to start again; and it presently transpired that Bedr Khan Beg was no longer on board. He had not been seen to land; and the ship could have touched at no harbour. There is often some apparent inconsequence in the movements of Government ships. "*Et quaesitum est a* Toad-in-the-hole *ubi est ille* Bedr Khan Beg?" "*Non est inventus.*"

The Young Turks have adopted a self-denying ordinance{38} with regard to such expedients; but they have hardly attempted to touch that cancer of Ottoman rule—the chronic corruption of the Administration. Turkey enjoys an admirable code of laws, and a revenue system which should be the envy of our own fiscal extremists; but it has also evolved along with them that other modern panacea, a multiplicity of jobs. Every single official, be he Old Turk or Young Turk, Arnaut or Armenian, is frankly "on the make." His post entitles him nominally to a starvation salary: yet he pays for it with a bribe, and he knows it is well worth paying for, since the incidental pickings will enable him to "make his pile."

The present officials did not reprobate their predecessors' conduct in this: they only envied their opportunities. If they had been allowed a chance of getting

a look in themselves, they would have been quite content with things as they were. But the Old Gang had packed the Government so artfully that nothing but a revolution could oust them; and so in due course the inevitable revolution happened. But the methods of administration remain essentially the same.

Internal development of the empire is hardly ever attempted. The standing instructions appear to be "Thou shalt do nothing at all." The central Government is quite content if open revolt is avoided; and if the taxes are gathered regularly enough to pay the officials' salaries, and to maintain the standing army. Abdul Hamid even attempted to dispense with paying the army; and this ill-judged bit of economy was the primary cause of his overthrow. An army is an institution which cannot be prudently starved.

Of course all this systematized corruption involves huge losses to the Government. The officials, for a consideration, will always allow their friends to "make a bit;" and will often undervalue their property for assessment by as much as 90 per cent. The Kurds are favoured at the expense of the Christians because their support has to be courted, although in the development of the country they are much the least valuable asset. Yet even the Kurds are not{39} reconciled by such means to the paying of their taxes. Not so much because the taxes are heavy as because they are unremunerative. They see no return for their money: no roads, no education, no irrigation works. They are paying not taxes but tribute, like the old vassal kings under Assyria; and consequently they are always ripe for revolt, if they see any prospect of obtaining external aid to enable them to revolt successfully; again like the vassal kings under Assyria, who knew well that they would get flayed alive if they failed.

The best one can say of the administration of justice is

that it probably is not quite as corrupt as it appears to be. The judge takes bribes from both sides with a view to remaining unbiased; and, if he is scrupulous, restores his bribe to the loser. In criminal cases, however, one must make allowance for a further principle. Among ourselves criminal acts are regarded as an offence against the State, and it is the State's duty to exact the penalty. But the Turks are inclined to regard such acts merely as an offence against the individual. The State does no more than recognize the right of the injured party (or his representative) to take his own revenge—if he can.[27] It will only itself occasionally condescend to act as his representative, if he chances to be an influential person, or if some influential outsider (say the British Consul) may be thereby obliged. Such a point of view is very primitive, and inevitably leads to much injustice; but we cannot hope to see this remedied until the Turk has digested our own Western principles, and he has not made digestion easier by electing to swallow them whole.

With regard to the Kurds[28] we desire to speak as charitably as we are able; and we may find warrant for this in the words of Mar Ephrem, the Syrian Bishop of Urmi, who,{40} writing to the Archbishop of Canterbury, could say no worse of them than that they were *wakshi* folk. *Wakshi* means merely "uneducated;" but it is only fair to add that it is a term of much greater opprobrium than seems quite reasonable in a country where not one man in a hundred is able to read or write.

The lack of education which the bishop laments is akin to that "weakness in arithmetic" which caused the Irishman to be hanged. They are apt to have more sheep in their villages than they can legitimately account for. They are a pastoral race, leaving agriculture almost exclusively to the Syrians and Yezidis; but we fear that their "pastoral" ideals are hardly those of Corydon or Meliboeus. Rather are they the modern representatives of those Elliots and Maxwells

and Johnstones who used to practise "the faithful herdman's art" upon our own border; and it might well be said to them (as was said to the chief of another great family whose enormities have since culminated in the acquisition of a dukedom)—

Had everye honeste man his awin kye,
A right puir clan thy name wad be!

Such doings are hardly criminal according to their own code of morals; and if they confined themselves to cattle raiding, or even to an occasional clean murder, we should be able to think of them more kindly. But we fear that yet darker deeds must sometimes be reckoned against them; deeds like those of Edom o' Gordon, or Black Adam of Cheviot, or like that which drew Hepburn's vengeance on Bertram of Mitford tower. It is highly interesting, no doubt, to find Donald Bean Lean in the flesh still practising his old avocations in the highlands of Asia Minor; but if we could also find there "the kindly gallows of Crieff," we do not hesitate to avow that our state would be the more gracious.

There is a British Vice-Consulate at Diarbekr, but at the date of our visit it was vacant. It is one of those posts which our Government is apt to suppress whenever retrenchment seems advisable. Certainly the Vice-Consul{41} must lead a dull enough life; and the British trade, which is the ostensible cause of his appointment, is a very nebulous entity. Yet the mere presence of a European constitutes a very real protection of the subject races in such an environment; and we owe at least this much recognition of our treaty obligations towards them.[29]

Our national prestige in the East rests chiefly on our dominance in India; and this is reflected in the fact that our Indian consulates in the south are much better maintained than those in the north, which are controlled from Europe. Our prestige too is a waning quantity. We are living, as it

were, on the capital accumulated for us by such men as Stratford Canning; and it must be confessed that latterly our policy has not been that of a Great Power. We seem content to preserve barbarism in Mesopotamia in order to make our position in India easier; and to discourage the Baghdad railway because it will make our frontier harder to defend. That our military men should take this view is excusable. They know our present unpreparedness; and some day it might even be their duty to destroy that railway, because forces at their disposal will not otherwise be adequate for defence. But from a national standpoint such a dog-in-the-manger policy must eventually bring its own punishment. Our most straightforward, and in the end our wisest, course would be to promote all developments, and to shoulder manfully the obligations which they entail.

We resumed our journey from Diarbekr across a lava-covered country by perhaps the bumpiest bit of road between Aleppo and Mosul. We and all our possessions were kept bouncing about in our *araba* like so many dry peas in a pod. The springs of a second carriage that was {42} travelling with us burst, and had to be spliced with string. Presently our own pole broke off short at the socket, and had to be lashed up with string likewise. By some miraculous dispensation the splice held out to Mardin.

These accidents and repairs delayed us, and nightfall caught us still on the moorland. Our driver went astray off the almost invisible pathway, and after a while was reduced to hunting for it with matches. We fished out a portable candle-lamp, which gave somewhat more illumination; but which scarcely seemed adequate for the next undertaking that awaited us—the fording of a fairly wide river, running strongly, about axle deep. Good luck, however, attended us, and we at length got safely to our *khan*.

Next morning we were clear of the volcanic district and pursued our way up a winding and fertile valley, which

was threaded (for a marvel) by a very presentable road. But over the *col* at the head there was no road whatever, and our horses had to scramble up a mountain side, rugged with earth-fast boulders and the roots of stunted trees. But this was the last of our obstacles. The road now revived intermittently; and though but half finished and hilly, it held on to the end of our stage. Towards evening we climbed the long zigzag ascent to the top of a 3000 feet mountain, and, crossing the ridge, wheeled immediately into the streets of the city of Mardin.

Mardin occupies a superb situation at the summit of one of the eminences which are ranged like a wall along the northern border of the Mesopotamian plain. All trace of an intervening plateau has here been completely eliminated; and from the foot of the declivity the ground stretches away to the southward in one illimitable level. The furthest identified landmark, a huge *tel* rising conspicuously in the far distance, was pointed out to us as Tel Kokab nearly eighty miles away.

These mountains are the Jebel Tur, the Mount Athos of the extreme east. They are a wild and barren district, containing very few villages, but thickly studded with ancient Christian monasteries; some of which date back to the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries, and most of{43} which are still occupied by small companies of Syrian monks.[30] Mardin is situated at the western extremity of this region; and the northern and eastern boundaries are formed by a loop of the Tigris, which flows behind the upland from Diarbekr to Jezire ibn Omar and issues there on to Mosul plain.

The hill on which the city stands is of a form which is not uncommon among the Kurdistan highlands, It rises from the plain in a single steep slope, unbroken almost from base to summit; but it culminates in a cresting of precipitous rock, so even and vertical that it looks like an artificial wall. Immediately behind the city this cresting

forms an isolated knoll, cut off at the back and ends as abruptly as along the front, and thus forming an immense table with a perfectly level top. Many of the hills adjoining are of similar conformation; and another, almost a replica of it, may be seen in the mountains further eastward, forming the site of the town of Amadia.

Amadia is built entirely on the level top, and the encircling line of precipice serves it instead of a rampart: but at Mardin the space on the summit is only sufficient for the citadel, and the town lies just at the foot of the precipice, sprawling down the southern slope of the hill. The houses look forth across the plain, each over the roof of its neighbour; and as even the lowest rank must be fully 1500 feet above plain level, they form a conspicuous assemblage visible for scores of miles away.

The town is some two miles in length and perhaps half a mile in width, and is reputed to contain about 80,000 inhabitants. It is built of a warm-coloured stone similar to that employed at Urfa; and, like Urfa, is largely composed of good substantial buildings, which can sustain a certain amount of dilapidation without lapsing altogether into squalor. The streets are narrow and tortuous, and run for the most part longitudinally; thus it is evident that the cliff which overhangs them cannot (like the Amadia cliff) be in the habit of dropping fragments down the slope{44} beneath it; otherwise the lanes would run vertically, and be a good deal wider than they are! Some of the principal mosques possess considerable architectural pretensions, with Arabesque stalactite corbelling inserted in the coves over the doorways, and a certain amount of good carving introduced here and there on the facades. They are generally covered with fluted domes—a rather unusual feature, but one which is very conducive to the general effectiveness of the design.

Mardin is a walled city, but its walls were never very formidable and are now mostly ruinous. They consist but

of broken fragments even on the citadel rock. The place was no Roman fortalice like Urfa or Diarbekr, and the part that it played in history was not of any great note. For some time it was the capital city of a petty dynasty of little independent Sultans; and the tomb of one of the most powerful of these forms a graceful adjunct to one of the chief mosques. One unique distinction, however, belongs to its rock-perched citadel. This is said to have held out successfully against the invincible Timour himself.

Mardin is in these days best known to us as the residence of the Patriarch of the Jacobites—Mar Ignatius, the modern inheritor of the throne of Antioch, that earliest of all Metropolitan sees. He resides at Deir el Za'aferan, the "Monastery of the Yellow Rocks," which is situated about five miles eastward upon the southern slope of the mountains, in a position very similar to that of the town itself but on a separate hill. Deir el Za'aferan is a very ancient foundation dating from the fifth or sixth century; and certain fragments of its original structure still survive to this day, incorporated in the existing buildings. They are of pronouncedly classical character, and display a strong similarity to the admittedly Roman work in the Church of St. James at Nisibin: but the major part of the monastery is of much more modern construction; for it has been almost constantly occupied ever since the date of its erection, and subjected to many vicissitudes, being frequently ruined and rebuilt.

The Syrian "Jacobite" Christians are a poor remnant{45} now, but they were once the dominant Church in that group of old Roman provinces that we style loosely, "Syria and Palestine," but which Romans called "The Orient," *Praefactura Orientalis*.

Syriac (*i.e.* Aramaic) was the vernacular of these lands, whose capital for both ecclesiastical and political matters was Antioch. Their use of a separate language gave a national tinge to their Christianity; and they resented the

Greek uniformity which the Emperor of Constantinople for political reasons sought to impose upon them. They fought this battle on the doctrinal field, refusing to accept the "Constantinopolitan" council of Chalcedon, and finding in that refusal a rallying-point for their own desire for independence.

For some time, it seemed probable that the emperor would seek to reconcile the discontented provinces by abandoning the council to which they objected; this policy, however, was rejected by Justinian (527-565), with the result that these "Monophysite"[31] malcontents organized themselves on a footing of separation from the Greek Church, but they remained in fellowship with the Churches of Armenia and Egypt; and the bulk of the Christian population of these provinces was in sympathy with them.

Thus, when the Mohammedan invasions of the seventh century commenced, the Arabs found that the bulk of the provincials were disposed to receive them as deliverers rather than as foes. In return, they recognized these Monophysites as the dominant Christian *millet* of these provinces, and so they remained for centuries.

Their nickname of "Jacobite" has nothing whatever to do with the "White Rose Society," but was given them during the sixth century. Justinian attempted to force them into "Orthodoxy" by imprisoning their bishops, so as to prevent the ordination of any clergy but those of whom he approved. While in prison, the bishops consecrated a certain monk Jacobus Baradaeus, to the{46} episcopate, and gave him a "roving commission." For thirty-five years he wandered from place to place in a beggar's horse-cloth (*bara'da*), and reorganized the whole separatist hierarchy.

Their Patriarch claims to be a true representative of the original Patriarchate of Antioch. In the days of their oppression, he was naturally not permitted to reside there, and shifted his quarters from monastery to monastery, till he settled at last at Deir el Za'aferan. The Greeks have of

course a Patriarch of the see, though they have to admit the existence of gaps in his line of ancestry, and a Latin claimant of the same was established in the time of the Crusades. These reside now at Damascus and Beyrout respectively.

The Jacobite Church comprises about a quarter of a million adherents in Asiatic Turkey with—we believe—twelve bishops; and there are about the same number under British rule in Malabar.

Neither they nor their eastern neighbours the "Nestorians" hold now (if they ever did) the peculiar heresies which their names suggest, and which their enemies credited them with teaching. Each has now come to teach, and perhaps has always taught, all the doctrine that their Orthodox opponents sought to guard at the councils which these Separatists nevertheless continue to repudiate. The old division continues; but more as a matter of convenience than of principle, and the more intelligent bishops on both sides admit that all real differences have disappeared.

Yet no fusion is likely at present, for the rank and file are unreconciled, and fortify their mutual suspicion with all sorts of groundless ideas. "Is it really true," asked an old Jebel Tur monk in all simplicity, "that the Nestorians wash their altar with asses' blood before they celebrate the Eucharist?"

The Nestorian deacon who attended us, and who heard this amazing aspersion, could hardly be restrained from falling on the inquirer there and then!{47}

CHAPTER III

THE MARCHES OF ANCIENT ROME

(DARA AND NISIBIN)

FROM the eastern gate of Mardin the road decants itself plainwards in a skein of curves and zigzags—a vertical descent of 2000 feet, spinning out its gradients to a length of five or six miles. It is not at all a bad road. One could easily bicycle down it—and perhaps even bicycle up it if in specially strenuous mood. But it is, as it were, the swan-song of the modern Ottoman Telfords, and as soon as it reaches the level it reverts into a sheaf of footpaths. Henceforth to the end of our journey we saw no more metalled roads.

We had now, too, a further reminder of the fact that we were quitting civilization, for a couple of *zaptiehs* rode with us to escort us over the stage to Nisibin. Hitherto such protection had been deemed needless: but in these remoter districts the Government prefers to have some tangible assurance of a European traveller's safety, seeing that it is liable to be held responsible if he is unfortunate enough to come to grief. Thus that modest intruder finds himself passed on from city to city with all the pomp and circumstance of an armed cavalry escort; and afflicted at every stage with the consciousness that he is passing current at a face value vastly in excess of his intrinsic worth.

The *zaptiehs* are a sort of military police, analogous to the Spanish Civil Guard or the Royal Irish Constabulary; though we fear that these two *corps d'elite* would not be likely to feel gratified at a suggestion that such deplorable ragamuffins should "march through Coventry" with them. {48} Personally, for the most part, they are good-humoured and obliging fellows; accepting rough weather and hard lodging with the utmost philosophy. Also they rather welcome the chance of a little escort duty. It is a pleasant change from the monotony of garrison life; and there is a tip to look forward to finally, though this must be "under the rose." "You have not mentioned that you've given us a

present?" said one of our fellows with engaging *naïveté* when we asked him to carry back a letter—"Because it isn't allowed!"

But though Western civilization extends thus far no longer, there is not wanting tangible evidence to prove that it was here long ago. In the midst of one of the first plain villages there rises, like a lofty *aiguille*, the angle of a Roman watch tower. It seems impossible that such a slender fragment should be able to withstand wind and weather much longer; but hitherto the huge square blocks have stood firm though all support has fallen away. A Roman church (or more probably a Roman house converted into a church) stands in another village; and at the end of a short day's journey we turned aside to visit some yet more striking remains.

The mountains at this point ravel out on to the plain in a line of gently sloping spurs, and from between two of these issues a broad and shallow but never-failing stream. The spurs immediately westward of it are conspicuously gashed across with wide deep transverse trenches; and as we draw nearer we perceive that the ridge on each side of the river is crested with a ruined rampart, and that the hollow enclosed between them is a regular sugar bowl of huge disjointed stones. Here and there out of the chaos rises the fragment of a mighty tower or a massive skeleton archway, and presently we can descry a few wretched Kurdish hovels half hidden among the débris of the great devastated city.

Such is now the fortress of Daras, once the Metz or Belfort of its age.





SHEIKH ADI.

The upper end of the buildings showing the forecourt and entrance gateway: and (apparently) "the Proprietor," seated on the wall above.

In the year 503, after the disastrous campaign which witnessed the fall of Amida and the failure to recapture{49} Nisibis, the Emperor Anastasius took his generals severely to task "for that they did not prosper nor succeed in the war according to his will under the Lord." The unfortunate generals protested that they could not reasonably expect to defeat a potentate who was manifestly commissioned by Providence to chastise the backsliding Romans—especially when he had such a large army. But they closed their jeremiads with one eminently practical suggestion viz.—that it was quite hopeless to attack Nisibis unless they had a strong base of operations close by. This notion appealed to Anastasius—a great believer in fortification, and the builder of the famous "Long Walls," the Byzantine Lines of Tchatalja. After some consideration he fixed upon Daras as the site of his new fortress; and (as it was church property) he bought it honestly, and commissioned Thomas, the Bishop of Amida, to undertake the contemplated work. The commander of the covering army

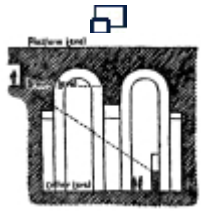
was one Felicissimus, of whom it is significantly chronicled that "he was not at all covetous;" but all the engineering work seems to have been supervised by the bishop. Anastasius supplied him with money freely, and engaged that neither he nor his successors should demand any accounts of the expenditure—which seems rather an extreme test even of a bishop's integrity. He specially stipulated, however, that none of the workmen should be defrauded of their wages, having ascertained (no doubt by a system of trial and error) that "cities (on the frontier) got built quicker that way." It is worthy of remark that a day's wage at that time was 4 *keratin* (2*d.*)[32] and that the services of an ass were rated as precisely equivalent to a man's. Upon these principles the work progressed rapidly, and the city was finished in three years; Kobad being engaged upon his eastern frontier, and quite unaware of what was going on.

"Is she not fair, my daughter of a year?" cried Cœur de Lion proudly as he gazed on Chateau Gaillard: and to build Chateau Gaillard in one year was certainly a fine{50} achievement, yet it was as nothing in comparison to the building of Daras in three. It gives us a great idea of the resources of the Byzantine Empire that Anastasius, an undistinguished, albeit a conscientious, ruler should have been able to bequeath to us so superb a monument of his power. Dara is very similar in site, as it is accidentally similar in name, to another Roman foundation, the town of Daroca in Aragon. It lies pooled in a cup-like depression between the two rims of high ground which are crested with its formidable ramparts; and through the midst of it flows the little river, which cannot be diverted anywhere and thus ensures a constant water-supply. At either end of the depression the ramparts stoop from their opposing heights and join hands with each other across the stream. At these points the water is admitted and discharged through cunningly contrived water-gates consisting of

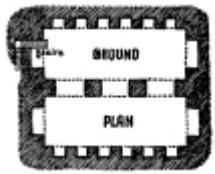
several small arches, once defended by metal grilles the mortices for which may still be seen. Formerly no doubt these arches could be closed by sluices. Thus a wide and deep inundation could be formed without the walls at the upper gate, which would provide additional protection; and a similar reservoir could be collected within the walls at the lower gate, and discharged to overwhelm any battering engines that might be advanced against the city from the plain.

The walls which crown the flanking heights are of singularly massive construction, and defended by a deep wide moat cut out of the solid rock. As at Diarbekr and Urfa (and in Spain at Lugo and Astorga) they are strengthened at frequent intervals by solid projecting round towers.

Within the city itself are some even more notable monuments. The builders of the fortress did not rely exclusively on the river for their water-supply, but provided a huge underground cistern, fed by a rock-hewn conduit and capable of storing nearly five million gallons at need. This cistern consists of ten parallel vaulted tunnels, each about 150 feet long and 13 to 14 feet wide, with an internal height of 40 feet from the floor to the crown of the vault. The division walls of this structure are thickly encrusted with{51} lime deposit, thus proving conclusively the purpose for which it was designed.



CROSS SECTION



GREAT GRANARY OF DARAS

A little distance away is a sort of square platform of masonry, rising a few feet above the general level of the ground. We penetrated into it by a dark and narrow passage, and groping our way gingerly down a steep descent by the light of a couple of candles we found ourselves at last in a titanic cellar, 60 feet long and 50 wide, divided by a massive arcade into two naves, and roofed by a double barrel vault 50 feet above the level of the floor. This is{52} doubtless the Great Granary mentioned by Zachariah of Mitylene; but (being underground) it is of course now deemed to have been a dungeon, and is known locally as “the Big Oubliette.” The prodigious size of the stones employed in building it, and the extreme solidity of the masonry, made us think of the famous cisterns at Constantinople as very inferior structures indeed.[33]

The use of such very large stones is a notable feature of Dara and gives a more grandiose character to ruins magnificent in themselves. Two average sized blocks on the ramparts, which still lay conveniently *in situ*, afforded ample area for the accommodation of a camp bed; and

each of the two taken separately must have weighed not much short of a ton. Even the houses appear to have been built of stones as large as those used in the fortifications. It would seem that they were employed in sheer bravado, as was undoubtedly the case with the yet bigger stones of Baalbec. Now all lie scattered at random over the whole area of the city, and it puzzles us not a little to conceive how such singularly solid buildings can have been so utterly overthrown. Earthquakes or battering rams might have demolished them; but then one would expect to find the débris lying in heaps as it fell. The stones might have been removed to construct new houses and enclosures; but then they would be disposed in some sort of regular lines. Did some Timour deliberately give order that no stone should be left upon another? Even he might have been daunted at such an undertaking, when the removal of each several block could employ a file of men for a day.

It is ever a futile task to prop a falling empire by the construction of prodigious defences; but at least Daras filled the gap long enough to witness the dawn of a more prosperous day. In the year 529—twenty-five years after the building of the city—Belisarius faced the Persian army on the flat ground just outside the lower water-gate. Perozes, the Persian commander, led a host of 40,000 soldiers; and{53} the young Roman general had but 25,000, a motley agglomeration of Goths, Huns, and Heruls—for at this period it was the Romans' custom to impress their Gothic captives to fight against the Persians, and their Persian captives to fight against the Goths. Belisarius distrusted his army; and with very sufficient reason. So great had been the decay of Roman "virtue" that over a generation had elapsed since last they had won a victory in the field! He drew up his troops behind a strong line of entrenchments, so close under the walls of the city that they constituted rather an outwork of the permanent fortifications than regular field works of the orthodox type.

Indeed, but that he had some scope for counter attack, he seemed rather preparing for a siege than for a battle. Remarkably timid tactics for a general who was soon to prove himself the most dashing commander of his age!

The Persians must have been pretty confident to venture upon attacking such a position. But Perozes felt no doubt of the issue, and sent in an arrogant message to the city ordering the baths to be made ready for his use that night. His troops attacked the Roman left so strongly as actually to force the trenches; but, disordered by their success, they offered an opening to the Herul cavalry, and a furious charge drove them back in complete disarray. Thus, freed from anxiety for his left, Belisarius was able to employ his whole reserve in a decisive charge on the flank of the Persian left who were endeavouring to envelop his right. This wing, the flower of the Persian army, was cut off and annihilated; but Belisarius, true to his prudent tactics, would not trust his raw troops in a prolonged pursuit. Perozes was thus enabled to carry off most of his wounded; cunningly inviting the citizens of Nisibis to come for the plunder of Daras, and thus obtaining the use of enough wagons to convey his maimed soldiers away.

We outspanned our caravan for the night on the very site of Belisarius' entrenchments just outside the lower water-gate; for the city enclosure itself is so cumbered with its own ruins that it is actually impossible to take wheeled vehicles inside. We might have carried our baggage in;{54} and the Armenian priest of the village (for there are about fifteen Armenian families living there) offered us the use of his house most pressingly, representing that our so honouring him would "increase his name" among the Kurds. But on this occasion we judged it better to keep all our possessions together, and stay ourselves to watch over their safety; and so (as already hinted) we spread our beds on the ramparts, just high enough up to avoid the mists which might be expected to rise from the stream. It proved

rather a draughty lodging, but this fact did not trouble us greatly; and we slept undisturbed until the morning star was high enough to give warning of the coming of the sun.

There is a side-show attached to Dara which is scarcely less interesting than itself; and as soon as we found ourselves in full possession of breakfast and daylight (two events which were practically contemporaneous) we decided that, before continuing our journey, we would turn back a mile or so westward to visit the tombs and caves. These make those conspicuous scars which had already attracted our attention as we approached the city—the wide deep transverse gashes which are scored across the neighbouring hill sides.

The rock-cut moat of the city could supply but a small part of the material required for all the buildings, and accordingly shoulder after shoulder of the hills to the westward has been pierced with quarries for more stone. When the masons had finished their job these quarries were promptly appropriated by a flourishing colony of hermits,[34] who honeycombed all the exposed faces with hundreds of cells and tombs. The cells are mostly cut into the vertical faces; the standard pattern having a round-arched recess{55} for a porch, with a seat on either side of it, and a small square-headed doorway in the middle admitting to a cell about eight feet square. One of the seats in the porch is often hollowed out to form a grave for the occupant of the hermitage or sometimes this niche has been cut out in the floor or wall of his cell. Other graves are above the quarries, sunk vertically into the horizontal surfaces. These have an oblong opening, and widen out below beehive-wise so as to form two or more tombs. The opening was covered in with a gable-shaped sarcophagus lid, and many of these are lying about though none are actually in position. No doubt they have been removed by searchers after buried treasure.

The biggest of all the caves must have served as the

anchorites' church. It has an elaborately carved doorway with bas-relief panels over it representing apparently the Nativity and the Descent into Hades. The interior is irregularly quadrilateral, and must measure about thirty-five feet across. It has a flat ceiling, and is partly surrounded by a gallery, about eight feet wide and eight feet below the ceiling, supported on a range of rock-cut corbelled arches. There is nothing to indicate the position of the altar, and the eastern side is occupied by the doorway; but the altar may have stood in the centre of the floor. The level of the floor itself is also a matter for conjecture, as at present it is deeply covered with débris. The place is now used as a sheep shelter, and is known as the *khan* or "Inn." It is lit by a single small window immediately over the door.

There is interest enough at Dara to occupy an archæologist for weeks together—for months if he sees fit to excavate—but we had to resume our journey, and we knew that if we wanted more archæologizing we should have no difficulty whatever in finding opportunity on the road. About three hours eastward of Dara stands another Roman fortalice—a big square castle standing in lonely grandeur amid the desolate plain. The walls are now sadly shattered, excepting the great round bastion which is planted at one of the angles; and within the ruined enclosure is hutted a squalid community of miserable half-naked Kurds. This{56} is doubtless the castle between Nisibis and Daras which Justinian ordered to be built in the first year of his reign. It was not auspiciously founded, for Kobad's army descended upon the builders before the work was completed, and the Romans were crushingly defeated, leaving most of their commanders[35] on the field. The future course of the war was, however, more favourably influenced by the fact that a certain junior general, of the name of Belisarius, escaped.

Another three hours of slow progress, and we find

ourselves approaching another township. The first indication of its neighbourhood is the apparition of a cobble-paved causeway, which gradually consolidates itself out of the dust of the desert, and holds its course steadily onward in a straight undeviating line. Probably it too is Roman, and if so the Romans were the last people who troubled to repair it; for it is so appallingly bumpy, and so frequently intersected by irrigation ditches, that the vehicles tactfully ignore it and keep to the unpaved ground. It leads us at length to a village which is somewhat larger than Dara, but which lacks all Dara's evidences of bygone wealth and grandeur. This place boasts a *khan* and a market, and is the seat of a local governor. But if it has not fallen so low as its neighbour, it has fallen infinitely farther: for this wretched hamlet is Nisibis, once the impregnable fortress which marked the furthest limit of the power of Imperial Rome.

Nisibis was won for Rome by the conquering arm of Lucullus. It was known then as Antioch in Mygdonia, because its fertile fields and shady groves irresistibly reminded the Graecian colonists of their lovely Antioch of Daphne. What a satire on Plutarch's explanation are the grim wastes which now environ it, and the barren hummocks of drift sand which have covered its ruins like a shroud! The Romans fortified the city with a triple rampart and a deep moat, and esteemed it (as it often proved itself) the principal bulwark of the east. They maintained a strong garrison in it; and the inhabitants,{57} living in a state of constant warfare with the Parthians and Sassanid Persians, made almost as reliable soldiers as the regular legionaries themselves.

When Sapor II made war on Constantius it was Nisibis that checked his invasions. Between the years 338 and 350 it sustained no fewer than three sieges, and on each of those three occasions it repulsed the invader from its walls. The last siege was also the greatest. Sapor advanced to the

attack at the head of an enormous army drawn from all parts of Persia and India, and pressed his assaults most vehemently for a period of over three months. The garrison was ably commanded by Count Lucilianus, but the soul of the defence was the celebrated bishop St. James of Nisibis; and Sapor, finding that he could make no impression by ordinary methods, conceived the idea of raising an enormous dam to obstruct the Jag-jag river (the ancient Mygdonius) and so flooding the place out. As the city lies in a slight depression this Gargantuan scheme was just feasible; and Sapor did actually contrive to create such an inundation that he could launch a fleet upon it and assail the defenders of the walls on level terms. The combined effect of the flood and the floating batteries opened a breach 150 feet wide, and the Great King ordered an immediate assault: but the attacking columns were bogged in the deep mud, and environed by invisible pot-holes; and to cap all, the elephants stampeded and trampled them underfoot by scores. At nightfall the Persians drew off, and the breach was repaired before morning. Sapor had lost 20,000 soldiers and broke up the siege in despair. Legend asserts that his retreat was much expedited by a prodigious plague of flies which descended on the Persian camp in response to the sainted bishop's orisons: but a sceptic might argue that when you have an Oriental army, with its usual disregard of every possible sanitary precaution, encamping in a marsh for three months during the height of a Mesopotamian summer, it needs no miraculous interference to account for something phenomenal in the way of flies!

Alas! all these efforts were wasted. Thirteen years{58} later the Emperor Julian was killed in his famous expedition against Ctesiphon. Jovian, in order to extricate the army, was compelled to sign an ignominious treaty; and one of the chief conditions that Sapor insisted upon was that Nisibis should be ceded into his hands. The

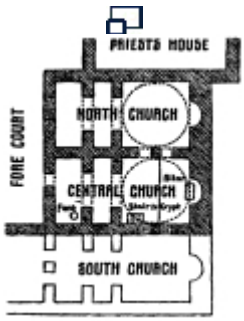
inhabitants implored the emperor's pity. Let him but give them leave to defend themselves, they would ask for no external aid. But Jovian was cowed by defeat, and afraid of offending the conqueror: and the townsfolk, well aware that they could expect no mercy from a potentate whom they had thrice discomfited, withdrew with all their possessions and left an empty city in the Persians' hands.

Nisibis under its new masters proved as impregnable a fortress as ever; but it won a new title to fame while under Sassanian rule. In the year 489 the Monophysite Emperor Zeno suppressed the great College of Edessa on the ground that it was tainted with Nestorianism. The Christian bishop of Nisibis was at that time a certain Bar Soma; a prelate of the type which asserted itself more prominently in the Middle Ages, in such men as Henry Despenser the martial bishop of Norwich, or Carillo the turbulent primate of Toledo. Bar Soma was a personage of some consequence at the Persian Court, and in fact seems to have held a position somewhat akin to Warden of the Marches. He had himself been a scholar at Edessa, and had remained on intimate terms with most of the professors; and he conceived the idea of re-establishing the college in his own cathedral town.

The college thus refounded prospered exceedingly, and remained for many generations the most important educational centre in the East. It boasted about 1000 students (for Oriental students pack close), and though its course was primarily theological, yet it did much to keep alive profane knowledge as well. Thus it forms a not unimportant link between ancient and modern learning. The wisdom of the Greeks, which it received from Edessa, it handed on in its turn to Baghdad and Cordova and Salamanca; and perhaps even Oxford and Cambridge and Paris and Padua may owe to the college of Nisibis more than they are quite aware.{59}

There may well be good booty at Nisibin for an

archæologist with a turn for excavation, for the mounds and hillocks which encircle it are manifestly piled on ancient walls. But there is little enough above ground—a bridge which is so badly battered that the carts prefer fording the river; a fragment or two of old walling; and a group of five monolithic columns, about two-fifths buried in débris, which are known as the columns of weighing, and which probably formed part of the peristyle of the forum. There remains, however, one special monument of even more interest to the ecclesiologist than to the antiquarian—the Church of St. James of Nisibis, one of the oldest Christian edifices in the world.



CHURCH OF SAINT JAMES AT NISIBIS

Few indeed are the Christian churches of earlier date than the fifth century. Even the famous basilicas at Ravenna and Parenzo were only erected in the sixth. With{60} the possible exception of Sta. Pudentiana at Rome there is no fourth-century church remaining in Europe, and even in Asia and Africa the examples may be counted on the fingers of the hand. But the date of St. James' church at Nisibis cannot possibly be later than the year 363, when the city was ceded to the Persians; and as it was built to receive the tomb of the saint (who died shortly after 350), it may be not improbably regarded as the citizens' thank-offering for their deliverance from the great siege.

The church was originally triple, dedicated no doubt to the Holy Trinity, and consisting of three square *cellæ* placed side by side. Each *cella* measured about twenty-five feet in width, and had a small semicircular recess in the centre of the eastern wall. A pair of arched openings, each about four feet wide, gave access from *cella* to *cella*; and a wider archway in each of the western walls opened into a triple narthex, furnished with three double doorways which opened into a courtyard.

The central *cella* is almost perfect as high as the cornice; but is roofed with a modern dome and pendentives, and has nothing to indicate conclusively the form of the original roof. The northern *cella* has been more damaged and restored; but still retains the narthex doorways (now blocked) which the central narthex has lost. The southern *cella*, with its narthex, has been entirely destroyed.

The side openings are spanned by heavy stone lintels, as also are the doorways in the narthex; but the western arches, and these over the apses, are open. Around them all internally runs a bold and richly carved architrave, which is also continued intermediately as a string along the walls. The foliage and mouldings throughout are thoroughly classical in feeling, and the work has all been executed in very finished style.

The tomb of St. James is in a tiny crypt under the altar in the centre of the central *cella*. It consists of a stone sarcophagus covered with a heavy ridged lid; and it is highly probable that his bones have never been disturbed.

The central *cella* is still used for Christian worship, and{61} has probably been so used continuously ever since the church was built. The northern *cella*, however, is not at present used. The Christians who live at Nisibin are Jacobites, and their Qasha inhabits a sort of little prophet's chamber built up against the northern wall of the church.

A change had to be made in our personnel for the

ensuing section of the journey. The *zaptiehs* who had accompanied us from Mardin had reached the end of their beat, and we had to apply for a fresh escort to carry us on to Mosul. One of our two new protectors had travelled with "Rabbi Mr. Wigram" before and "knew him to be virtuous and generous," so relations promised to be harmonious. They were instructed to call for us at the *khan* at daybreak, "as soon as there was light enough to distinguish between a black thread and a white." They turned up fairly punctually; but it then transpired that two of our horses needed shoeing, and that the drivers (of course) had not considered it necessary to attend to the matter until it was time to start. Thus the day was quite two hours old when we forded the Jag-jag river, and bumped off along the causeway which leads from the end of the bridge.

Eastward from Nisibin to Mosul—a distance of 120 miles as the crow flies—lies a stretch of unmitigated desert which is known by the expressive name of the *Chôl*. For a journey of four or five days (according to the conditions of travelling) you pass no permanent human habitation, and the same monotonous level lies before you at every stage. You must carry your own provisions with you, your own shelter for your nightly bivouacs, and (if you are prudent) your own furnace for boiling the water. Even that water itself is only found at rare intervals in stagnant muddy puddles or intermittent and starveling streams.

The *Chôl* is no sandy desert like the Obi or the Sahara. It is rather what the Spaniards would call a *dehesa* or *despoblada*—a waste which might be made fertile by the expenditure of a little pains. It is covered with sparse grass and stunted shrubs, and thistles which are by no means stunted; and a little desultory cultivation which is carried on along the outskirts proves that, with the{62} re-establishment of irrigation, it might again be converted into one of the granaries of the world. Once it supported an

immense population, for it was the home of the ancient Assyrians; and though the nucleus of that nation was concentrated at Nineveh and the adjacent townships, yet there must have been thousands of surrounding villages to supply food for the crowded cities and recruits for the mighty armies which dominated the whole Eastern world.

They have left some trace of their handiwork, for the whole extent of the desert is studded with gigantic *tels* spaced six or seven miles apart—huge mounds of earth as big as Silbury Hill. What purpose these can have originally served is a matter of much conjecture. Possibly they were sepulchral tumuli, possibly the mounts of village castles, possibly high places for the performance of sacrificial rites; but in any case it is evident that they cannot have been erected without a vast amount of human labour, and that the whole of the present population would not suffice to raise one. Now they serve chiefly as landmarks by which the faintly marked road can steer its course towards the horizon; and in several instances they still form burial places, possibly from some vague feeling that they must have been sacred long ago.

The more direct southerly road from the Euphrates ferry to Mosul traverses this desolate region for a journey of fully ten days; but the three or four days extra entailed by the divergence through Diarbekr bring with them their own compensation in the shape of greater interest on the way. Moreover the *Chôl* has its dangers. In summer it is a veritable furnace, and tall awe-inspiring dust devils stalk about it like wandering Jann. But the chief terror of travellers is the "Poison Wind" or *Sâm*, a faint invisible eddy of scorching air, which will pick out a single man or beast from the midst of a caravan and strike him down instantly senseless, sometimes even killing him on the spot.

At the other end of the scale the district is not exempt from blizzards. In the extraordinarily severe winter of

1910-1911 the northern part of the *Chôl* was visited by a prodigious snowstorm—a most unusual phenomenon—and{63} many parties of Arabs were positively snowed under in their encampments and perished of cold and hunger before they were able to extricate themselves.[36] A wandering Kurd related to us how he had stumbled on such a camp after the visitation was over. His suspicion that something was amiss was first aroused by the fact that he encountered no challenge either from man or dog. When he came to the tents he found them full of dead bodies. The only living creatures among them were one old woman and a mare. Feeling sure that the old woman must die in any case he only brought the mare away with him; "but she died too," he said plaintively, "before I could get her to my camp."

More than one carriage load of travellers perished on the road in that catastrophe; but our only discomfort on this occasion was a steady downpour of rain. We were told that we ought to feel grateful for it—that at least it would ensure us against any shortage of water. But no one can be expected to feel very grateful for five successive rainy bivouacs: and even our *zaptiehs* grumbled a little—three wet days they were prepared for, but no one ever expected to get more! Our horses were the principal sufferers, for the wheels bit deep into the sodden ground and picked up huge dollops of loam which festooned themselves around the felloes. We walked many miles to relieve them; but it was like walking over wet plough-land in England, and we were obliged to pause every few paces in order to disburden ourselves of the lumps which had balled on our feet. Stiff European boots are not nearly so good for such work as the flexible brogues of the natives; and the spongy pads of the camels are apparently the best things of all.

Some of the wild life of the desert showed itself in a herd of gazelle, which cantered across our pathway a mile or so ahead. We roused, too, a flock of herons, several

sheldrake,{64} a wild goose or two, and an occasional covey of larks. After dark we became aware of the jackals, which began whining dolefully around us; and on one occasion at nightfall, loping along the skyline just over our bivouac, we espied a solitary wolf. Human beings were a very great rarity, despite the fact that we were following a recognized highway, and for two consecutive days the only sign of their neighbourhood was a solitary black Arab tent which we spied some four miles to the right. Twice, however, we encountered a caravan of camels—about seventy strong in one instance, and about thirty in the other. Camels are preferred to mules on the plains as they carry much heavier burdens. Moreover one man (with a donkey) can look after seven or eight camels, whereas a caravan of mules requires about a man apiece.

Our choice of camping-grounds was dictated each night by the presence of water; for despite the steady downpour very little remained upon the surface, and the rain apparently soaks through immediately into the underlying strata, as on the *Causses* of Auvergne. The water was always muddy and sometimes bitter; but as we invariably boiled it, and kept the beasts away from it till we had filled our kettles, we believe that we swallowed nothing worse than sterilized mud. We used to spread our beds on the lee edge of our waterproof ground sheets, and draw the outer edge over us as an additional protection. But the rain sometimes penetrated everything, and in the morning we would find great pockets of water between the double thicknesses of the waterproof sheets. Decidedly camping-out is an amusement to be practised in the summer when the nights are short, for nights in the open are very tedious. You turn in about seven-thirty, and awake (thinking it nearly dawn) to find that it is eleven. You wake again about two; and then at gradually diminishing intervals, till at last you are rejoiced to find it five-thirty—breakfast time. Once in the middle of the night we were disturbed by

one of the horses breaking picket; and the owner arose and gave chase, with frequent ejaculations of *Mashallah*! (Praise God!)—hardly the sort of comment that one would expect from a British dragoon!{65}

In the afternoon of the fourth day the *zaptiehs* began to hold out hopes to us of lodging that night under shelter; for a big semi-permanent Arab encampment was generally to be found at this stage. And sure enough a little later we were able to make out some eight or nine big black tents, grouped around the remains of a ruined village with the wreck of a castle on its *tel*. Several such ruined villages are found here and there about the desert, but the inhabitants have long since been badgered out of them by Turkish tax-collectors and Arab raiders. The Arabs, though delightful hosts and most romantic features in a landscape, are not desirable neighbours. They submit to no control whatever; and, only a few months before, they had pillaged a Government caravan, which was conveying a big pumping engine to Mosul, and carried off all the gun-metal bearings under the delusion that they were gold![37]

We dispatched a *zaptieh* ahead of us to announce our approach and to bespeak hospitality; but dusk had already fallen before we ourselves arrived. The jaded horses had heavy work to drag the carriages forward; and we walking on in front of them, reached the outskirts of the camp a considerable distance ahead. Here, however, we were met by our returning *zaptieh*, who would not hear of our proceeding further. The *Sheikh Birader Effendi* (Milord Brother Esquire) had already caused him great scandal by walking so much and so needlessly when he had hired a carriage to ride in; and now he insisted that we should fatally compromise our dignity if we did not drive up like gentlemen to our entertainer's tent door.

We drove the last 200 yards accordingly, and dismounted at one of the largest tents; where we were courteously welcomed by Sheikh Ahmed Agha, a fine-

looking elderly Arab of medium height and active build, with a pointed grizzled beard and a nose like the beak of an eagle. He shook hands with us *à la Franga*, and led us into his tent,{66} where he made us sit down opposite to him on mattresses spread on the ground.

The tent was some forty yards long and twelve yards wide; about twelve feet high at the ridge and three to four feet at the eaves. It was supported upon a row of seven central poles, and the guy ropes were exceedingly long, the pegs being three dozen yards beyond the overhang of the eaves. The space between the eaves and the ground was filled up partly by hanging cloths, and partly by piles of dried thistles, which come in useful as fuel. The tent cloth was of black goats' hair, very loosely woven like coarse English sacking. We could see daylight through it everywhere; particularly at the (horizontal) seams, where it gaped like an old umbrella. The smoke oozed freely through it; and next morning every tent in the camp was veiled in a sort of blue nimbus, the combined effect of smoke and evaporation. Such a texture can afford but indifferent protection against rain, but is needed chiefly as a shelter from the sun.

At the further end of the tent were about a dozen shackled camels, which we could hardly see in the darkness, but heard grunting and gurgling all night. Next the camels were four or five mares tethered to a manger. White mares and flea-bitten greys are most in demand in this country, as they are considered to feel the heat less than bays or browns. Black horses are reputed unlucky, and may consequently often be bought cheap.

Next, in the centre of the tent, sat the Sheikh; with his back against one of the poles, and the fire burning on the ground before him: and opposite him, with our backs against the next pole, sat we. Behind us was a reed partition shutting off the women's quarters, and with them (to judge by the sounds) lived the poultry and the sheep. A

sort of enclosed yard, hedged in with piles of dried thistles, had been formed for their special benefit outside their end of the tent.

There was no light except the fire and our own imported candle. When the inmates wanted a blaze they threw on an armful of thistles; but their principal fuel consisted of{67} cakes of dried camels' dung which an old fire tender built up in the form of a hollow cone. Our *zaptiehs* and several of the Sheikh's tribesmen sat with us; and two small boys, his grandsons, cuddled themselves up against his knees. The Sheikh of course spoke only Arabic, and we had to converse through an interpreter; but one of the *zaptiehs* was a great chatterbox, so the conversation did not flag. The women naturally did not show, but (like Sarah, Abraham's wife) they were by no means inattentive listeners; and the Sheikh got frequently prompted by a shrill "Ask him so and so!" from behind the screen.

From time to time we were served with tiny cups of black coffee containing about a tablespoonful each; and our supper consisted of a dish of fried eggs and dates. We have been told by a travelled Syrian (though we will not vouch for his authority), that an uninvited guest should be cautious when he is offered coffee by an Arab chief. He may accept the first two cups—that is just conventional politeness—but the offer of a third is a hint that he had better be going, and if he is too obtuse to take it, the next hint may be given with a gun! We, however, drank several cups and experienced no resentment; and our night in the black tents of Kedar was one of the pleasantest on the road.

We made a late start the next morning, for it would have been discourteous to hurry; and apparently Arabs, when camping, are not particularly early birds. Our host bade us farewell at his tent door, and accepted with great amiability the trifling present which we offered to him in recognition of his hospitality. Any suggestion of payment would of course have been an insult; but a present is often expected,

and always well received.

It was a brighter morning; and the *zaptiehs* hazarded an opinion that "Allah would be merciful." Far to the north we could see once more the mountains of Kurdistan, with gleams of sun sparkling on their snow-fields; and nearer to us on the southward lay the long barren ridges of the Sinjar. But this promise of better things was of very short duration, and before mid-day the rain had recommenced. {68}

At nightfall we reached our last camping-ground, overlooking the river Tigris; and here we underwent our last drenching—the longest and heaviest of all. We lay dozing under our waterproofs listening to the patter of the raindrops, and fondly hoping that the dawn might bring us just five minutes respite to enable us to pack up and stow away in the dry. But at last we started up desperately—bundled our beds on to the carriages—and dashed away dripping and reckless without even waiting for food. We knew that just twelve miles ahead we should find real houses with roofs to them—that an hour would bring us to cultivated fields again, and two hours within sight of Mosul. We passed through the city gate with as much relief as the snail and the tortoise must have felt when they entered Noah's Ark at the tail of the procession; and descended joyfully from that weary *araba* in which we had been cooped up like Bajazets for a journey of seventeen days.{69}

CHAPTER IV

THE BURDEN OF NEWER NINEVEH

(MOSUL)

THERE are more pleasant places in the world than the city

of Mosul. Hot, white, and dusty, it lies on a rather "hummocky" site along the right (or western) bank of the Tigris, looking across to where the mounds of Nebi Yunus and Koyunjik mark the site of Nineveh.

It boasts a population of about eighty thousand souls, of whom perhaps a fourth are Christians, and five thousand Jews: and the whole is surrounded by a wall and moat which enclose rather more than a square mile of ground—an area about equal to the city of London.

The wall may follow old lines, but is itself no more than a century old. It is rapidly splitting to pieces owing to the poorness of its construction, a process much assisted both by private citizens and by the Government, both of whom wish to make use of its stones. Probably, the foundations are shaky, for the whole town suffers from that failing; and every minaret in the place has a conspicuous kink in it, except the principal one, which has two.

The town does not now fill up its walls, a large quarter at the northern end having been so devastated by plague about three hundred years ago that it was abandoned. This area now remains empty, and there is in consequence a certain amount of "overflow" beyond the walls at the southern end of the town, where stands the Government serai with the barracks of the troops in its neighbourhood.

Mosul is not a seaport, though the Government of his Britannic Majesty would seem to be invincibly ignorant {70}on this point. When the Consulate was re-established here a few years ago, the gentleman appointed asked for a grant for the furnishing of his reception-room, but was refused, on the ground that his only guests would be "a few old sea captains"; to this day his successors are required to make an annual return of the British shipping that has discharged cargo here, though nothing except a "*keleg*" (the local type of raft, of which we shall hear more) ever comes within three hundred miles of the place!

Mosul boasts one vice that is at least unusual in the land, for it is a smoky town. A pall hangs over much of the city, from the kilns where the local marble is burnt into lime. Nearly the whole city is built in what is known as *jess* construction. This is a primitive type of building, the walls of all houses being formed with rough blocks of stone, "balled" in lime cement, and so put together. The roof is domed in the same way, but to save material the spandrils are usually filled in with large earthenware pots, which may or may not stand the weight put upon them. As a style, it is deceptive, for it looks solid, enduring, and weather-proof, and yet is none of the three: a house built in it seldom stands for eighty years, the thrust of the dome normally bringing the walls down by the end of that period.

The construction, which cracks freely, has a way of absorbing much of the rain that falls upon it, so that a house is seldom really dry in winter; and the cement has a delightful trick (which is appreciated during a Mosul summer) of storing up heat during the day and gradually releasing it during the night.

The town is composed, like most Oriental cities, of a maze of winding featureless lanes, all of the same white cement, and rarely of a width that forbids a cat to jump across from one roof to the opposite; they are innocent of lamps, or rather were so till the late Nazim Pasha (then Vali of Baghdad, and superintendent of this province also) visited the place; when paraffin lamps were put up in his honour, and now stand unlighted on their brackets. The pavement is of large cobble-stones, worn smooth by many generations of slippers and bare feet; and the whole town is, of course, innocent of drains. Hence, in the rainy season{71} it is well to put a portable bridge across the street if you propose to visit your neighbour, or to wear wooden pattens some six inches in height.

Only the doorways break the blank walls in the street

fronts of the houses, but the courtyards within are undeniably picturesque, and are of a plan that is at least ancient, for it is identical with that found in the cities of ancient Assyria, unearthed by the German excavator of to-day. An entry, carefully constructed so as to prevent the passer-by from seeing within even when the door is open, conducts into a courtyard, surrounded by a two-storied cloister, carried on monolithic pillars of the local grey alabaster. The court is usually paved, and the house-front often cased, with the same material. A deep open recess at one side provides a summer lounge. A water conduit usually runs through the court itself, and the central part is often used as a garden.

The house of a rich man invariably has its *serdab*, or underground summer-parlour, where you may get any coolness that is going in the fierce summer heats. The thermometer then goes up regularly to 120°, and seldom sinks below 95° by night or day—a fact attested by a certain British Consul, who tried the experiment of hatching out a sitting of eggs, left uncovered in a disused (and perhaps rather specially hot) room of his Consulate.

Resident Europeans say that the *serdab* may be cool, but that, unless very well seasoned, you are apt to pay for the use of it by a dose of the country fever.

Hot winds blow in from the desert which comes up to the very walls, and the dust from the kilns and pounding-yards (where mules drag rude rollers over the lime to grind it to powder) flies on their wings all over the city; so that, from this cause, and from the glare of the white walls ophthalmia is even more prevalent here than in most Oriental cities, and lung disease of various kinds abounds. Another local plague is the famous “button,” which is found from Aleppo to Baghdad, and is believed to go back to the days of Job. This is sometimes called “the date,” from its appearance, and is no more than a{72} painless, but very unsightly, boil; which refuses to heal for twelve

months and leaves a permanent scar behind. The infection is believed to be carried by flies, and the disease certainly manifests itself, as a rule, on the face or hands, while those who shave are particularly liable to it. Local scandal tells of a certain German Consul who despised all precautions and slept on the roof of his house without curtains, and (the night being hot) without pyjamas also; an imprudence for which he paid the penalty in thirty fine "buttons" scattered all over his consular person!

Thermantidotes, ice supplies, and all other luxuries of English life in India are unknown in Mosul, though an enterprising Christian resident in the town did once introduce an ice-machine. This was certainly welcomed by the Vali, as the only sign of the new régime that he had found in Mosul (it was shortly after the revolution), and as the only token of progress of any sort that he could note as a result of the fifty years that had elapsed since he had formerly been in the place as a very junior civil officer.

There was strong conservative opposition to the introduction even of such a mild instalment of progress; though perhaps it might have been mollified, had the pioneer been a little more liberal with his distribution of *bakhshish*! As it was weird accusations circulated against the new engine; it smelt so abominable that the whole neighbourhood of the factory was unhealthy (as though one stink more or less could make any difference in Mosul); it turned out its ice red-hot, and materially increased the heat that it was proposing to alleviate; and it was an impious interference with the decrees and arrangements of Allah. The ice-merchant, however, had not been born in Mosul, and bred in America, without learning a thing or two; and he craftily put the general commanding the garrison on the free-list for ice. He calculated that, after the first week or so, a gentleman, who did not keep the law about total abstinence too strictly, would not tolerate any interference with the coolness of his

drinks. That expedient worked admirably, and all interference was summarily squashed, for so long as the machine continued to work at all. That, however,{73} was not many weeks, for no machinery that is not absolutely and completely "fool-proof" can stand the handling it gets from an Arab, and in Mosul the simplest repair may necessitate months of delay. There will be no market for machinery in the interior of Turkey, until good repair shops can be provided as well.

As capital of the province Mosul is the residence of a Vali, but the town is administered under him by an "administrative council of reputable citizens," who are popularly believed to be the most corrupt gang of the sort in all Turkey. And we devoutly hope that the imputation is true, for any clique which is more corrupt than they are must be black indeed. Their leader is one Haji Ahmed, "son of the soap-seller," ibn Sabonji; a large landed proprietor who has accumulated his estate by the simple process of ordering any unhappy Naboth whose land bordered on his own to sell to him at any price that his big neighbour cared to name. If the small man consented, well and good; if not, then an accusation against him, accompanied with a trifle of *bakhshish* to the investigating judge, secured that the imprudent Naboth should live untried in the town prison till such time as he should see reason.

This worthy has had ups and downs in his life, and once fell very foul of a Vali, who was seized with natural zeal to check the plundering of the public purse when he found that Sabonji Pasha had laid hands on certain funds that he had intended to appropriate himself! Thus that distinguished member of the town council was pilloried; *i.e.* was put on a donkey with his face blackened and turned to the tail, and so led round the town; being thereafter put into the cesspool of the Government "*Serai*" to pass the night. "*Iyba*" (shame) such as this would end

the career of most men, but Sabonji has some unusual gifts, and intrigue and bribery soon brought him into power again.

The fact that one of the finest and largest houses in the town was built by one of the smaller legal officials, nominally out of fifteen months' saving of a salary which, when paid, amounted to sixty pounds per annum, may perhaps be evidence of what "pickings" amount to in the trade of{74} law; and the story of a recent episode (occurring in the year of grace 1910) in the career of a prominent and highly respected citizen of the town will speak more clearly than long descriptions.

Seyyid Ullah was the principal burglar of Mosul, having inherited a practice in that profession from his father, as naturally as son may follow sire in the medical business in England. Housebreaking was what he specialized in, and the usual mode of procedure was to dig through the wall of a house with pickaxes from the street; it having been found, by experience, that this was less laborious than breaking down an iron-bound door. Of course, arrangements had to be made that the police should be well away on the other side of the town (if they were not engaged, as sometimes happened, in securing the ends of the street against any interruption), but there was seldom any difficulty about that. It was an understood thing, seemingly, that you must not interfere with the trade by which a man earned his bread; and Seyyid Ullah was only held to have over-stepped his legitimate rights once—when he cut off a woman's hands! Even then, it was admitted in extenuation that there really was no other way of getting her gold bangles.

Having, acquired a competence in his profession, Seyyid Ullah retired as he grew older; but, like other energetic gentlemen, found that he really needed something to do. For this reason, he took to smuggling tobacco, a profitable occupation, but one that brought him into collision with the

Government in a way that mere burglary had never done—for tobacco is a Government monopoly. So one night a caravan of mules on their way to his house were attacked by the guards of the "Regie," and not only were the loads lost, but there was a dead policeman to explain. He had died of a Mannlicher bullet; and there was only one rifle of that type in Mosul—the property of Seyyid Ullah; who notoriously allowed nobody else to handle it. Moreover the bullet had apparently come from a roof where that poor man was standing at the time.

Some unscrupulous enemy put all these coincidences before the Government, with the result that Seyyid Ullah{75} was arrested, and even ordered into gaol. Not that he entered it, for gaol is not for such as he; he merely sat in the coffee-shop outside, and when that enemy who had given the information went past on his way to market, he was mobbed and hustled by the Seyyid's followers, till a formal petition had to be sent in to the Vali that he should be requested to go inside. Of course they gave him the best room, with a window looking over the street; and the governor of the prison used to give him his company to dinner and pass the time over a backgammon board; but he complained that the damp was bad for his rheumatism.

At last the worthy man was tried; and acquitted without a stain upon his character. The court held (so far as foreign residents could understand) that the policeman had been guilty of contributory negligence, in that he got in the way of a bullet that was travelling about on its lawful occasions; and that all facts about the make of the rifle, and so on, were irrelevant details.

A free man again, Seyyid Ullah came at once to call upon the British Consul, to explain that he quite understood that his release from the machinations of his enemies was due solely to the influence of his Excellency the Bey; and that he was more than ready to undertake any job the Consul desired, in the way of removing any

objectionable person, for he must own that the expenses incidental to his acquittal had made a sad hole in his savings!

Some time previous to this, there had been great complaining among the merchants of Mosul over the depredations of a certain gang of thieves, all of whom were well known to the police, and who were plundering peaceful citizens apparently at their own sweet will.

Authority, though most unwilling, was prodded into some sort of activity, and that particular gang was arrested and stowed in gaol. The robberies, however, did not diminish a whit; and after a while the governor of the prison pointed out this fact to the Vali. Evidently "those poor men" had been wrongly arrested after all, and ought in fairness to be released—seeing that they had never been{76} tried. This seemed reasonable, but there was the usual delay before doing anything, and in those few days the true explanation came to light. The honourable the governor of the prison was in the habit of letting the gang in question out of the gaol every night, "to go and sleep at their own houses." They returned again before dawn, thus getting the most satisfactory alibi any man could desire; while, in consideration of his complacency, the governor was taking half their plunder! It is true that this official was dismissed from his post in consequence, but apparently he received no further penalty of any sort.

This may, perhaps, sound a "tough yarn"; yet we may find a fairly recent parallel for it in England. The memoirs of William Hickey record an even worse scandal of one of the London bailiffs in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Our boasted superiority to this sort of thing is of very recent date, and perhaps will not be of very long duration.

The Governor-General or Vali, who ruled this city of confusion and corruption, was perhaps as good a man as could have been selected for a job where his powerlessness

to effect any real improvement would have broken the heart of anyone who still had any enthusiasms or delusions left.

Tahir Pasha was an Albanian by blood, though he had grown grey in the Sultan's service, and had certainly never seen his own mountains since boyhood. Still, "once an Arnaut, always an Arnaut," and, as a general rule, men of that very striking race are the best possible Ottoman officials; particularly in places where their duty is (or is supposed to be) the preservation of an even balance between the various Christian and Mussulman races.

It is impossible for an Arnaut to despise all Christians just because of their religion; for a large proportion of his own race are of that creed, and it is an axiom that every Arnaut is congenitally superior to every other specimen of manhood. That being so, he may despise all his subjects equally (and very probably does so), but at least he does not despise any one set specially, and there is always a chance of his doing some justice among them.{77}

And this Tahir Pasha did, to the limits of his not very extensive power. He had no great belief in Reform, or for that matter in anything else (except the straightness of certain English gentlemen whom he knew, and in the genius of his favourite hero, Admiral Nelson): and he held shrewdly that "you cannot build very high, when your bricks are made of wet mud"—and of Mosul slime at that he might have added, though he did not say so in words. Still, under his rule nobody's lot was intolerable if it was impossible for anybody to be really comfortable; and he had absolutely nothing to learn in the art of keeping a simmering province from boiling over, when the Government had no force to back its orders, and did not wish to have any open row. He was an elderly man, tall and portly; with a "short" face, framed in a close-cropped, white beard, and a shrewd and humorous expression. Nature had given him a most attractive manner; and by

virtue of it he had survived two revolutions in the country, being the only man of his rank to do so. When things went amiss, "he sat on the stile and continued to smile," and almost always found that the method softened the heart of the most furious of cows.

Further, he was singularly cleanhanded, as Ottoman officials go. Even those who declared that he took bribes in his youth admitted that he refused them in his old age —"unless they were very big," they added. Well, for the bribes, what is an official to do, whose salary, is in the first place, wholly inadequate; and in the second, not paid? When he did not need them, he ceased to take them. "How otherwise? I liked him, I confess," as Browning put it, of a character that much resembled the old Albanian; whose name (by the way) is, being interpreted, "Innocent," and who had the reputation throughout his province of never sending a petitioner away dissatisfied, and yet of never making a promise that it was inconvenient to keep.

Moreover, there were times when Tahir Pasha could insist on justice; and the fact is rare in Turkey. In 1910 a particularly dastardly murder was committed in Mosul, the murderer being a Christian by race, a member of the "Chaldaean" or "Uniat Nestorian" Church; while{78} the victim was of the older and independent Nestorian body. [38] The murderer was, most deservedly, sentenced to death; but that does not at all necessarily imply execution in Turkey. To begin with, Ottoman law lays it down that in a murder case the next of kin of the victim has the right to require the remission of the death sentence if he desires it. This is no doubt a relic of the days when every man could avenge or forgo his own quarrels as he chose; but in practice, it works out very inconveniently for the man in question, who, in addition to losing his own nearest relative, has to undergo a lot of "peaceable persuasion" from the murderer's relations, till he chooses to exercise the right. In this case, however, the next of kin, also a

Nestorian, stood firm, and claimed his legal revenge.

On this the murderer showed the real depth of his Christianity by sending word to Tahir Pasha that if his life were spared he would turn Moslem. Whether the Mollahs were desirous of obtaining so doubtful a convert does not appear, but at least the Pasha was not eager.

"Of course, I am bound to be glad that he proposes to turn Moslem," he said grimly. "It may even be better for him in the next world. Still, his head has got to come off in this."

But now a third difficulty arose, from the fact that the lawful executioner refused to act. Like Koko in "The Mikado," this *Monsieur de Strasbourg* declared that he "had never cut off a gentleman's head in his life, and did not know how it was done." Under these circumstances, there was nothing for it but to call for a volunteer; and another relative of the murdered man generously offered to do his best, if they would lend him a sabre. "You had better do your best," said some official, "for if you fetch the head off with one chop you shall have thirty pounds, but if it takes a second blow you go to prison for five years!" Under this stimulus the amateur executioner did his part to admiration, and took the head off finely.

Even so there was an afterpiece to the play, for many folk made the conduct of this murderer a ground for a most{79} unfair attack on the Patriarch of the Chaldaean Church, saying, "Now we see what sort of Christian Mar Immanuel trains." The retort that his Grace made, if not exactly scrupulous, was at least effective. Ignoring the offer to turn Moslem altogether, he declared, "Pupil of mine? He certainly was, and I am proud of him. He is a Christian martyr, for he would not have been executed if it had not been for that wicked Nestorian heretic!" And he cited in proof of his saintliness the "miraculous" light above the grave.

The light was there certainly, a form of phosphorescence that is seen at times above a fresh grave in that dry air, and which is usually taken as a proof of the sanctity of the occupant. We suppose that we may be thankful that this rather doubtful character was not enrolled among the saints.

It will be inferred from the foregoing incident that religion in Mosul is of a somewhat militant type. It is in fact one of the most fanatical towns in the empire; and was surely the only place where men wept openly in the streets on hearing of the deposition of Abdul Hamid, and exclaimed, "Now is the pillar of Islam fallen."

The establishment of a British Consulate there, after a long interregnum, was either the cause or excuse for an outbreak. Certain Dervishes fastened on the fact that the flagstaff on the Consulate was higher than the crescent on the dome of a certain tomb, called the tomb of Cassim, where a descendant of the Prophet was interred. It was, of course, intolerable that the accursed red-cross flag should flaunt itself above the crescent, and a mob assembled at the Consul's gates, shouting under the leadership of a Dervish of some fame, "O Fatima, Fatima, daughter of the Prophet, will you not avenge the shame of your descendant?"

Rather strangely it had never occurred to them to resent the fact that a Christian Church had been standing higher than the tomb for centuries; yet the Consulate was in fact an empty monastery, rented from the authorities of the "Jacobite" Church by its present occupier.{80}

Of course, the British official respects the monastic churches, which number two; and they are used for service on certain festal days.

As for the tomb which caused the *emeute*; if Fatima, or somebody else, does not see to it soon, it will disappear into the Tigris, on the bank of which river it stands. The current is eating into the bank under its foundations, and

the whole fabric is leaning over dangerously. Its fall would be a loss, for it is a fine specimen of Arab architecture; and besides, the British Consul would be blamed. Obviously, the cause of the disaster will be Cassim's desire to be rid of such bad company.

As a city Mosul is singularly well be-bishoped. No fewer than three Roman Catholic prelates exercise jurisdiction in it over their various flocks; and there is, in addition, at least one "Jacobite" bishop; one Nestorian (who is at present in exile on the charge that his presence is a cause of disturbance to other people), and sundry Armenian, Greek, and Anglican Christians who render obedience to none of the resident bishops at all. The facts will bear a word of explanation; particularly as the existence of more than one Roman Catholic bishop in one diocese seems strangely contradictory to the discipline of that Church elsewhere.

In the days of the Byzantine Empire the attempt to enforce Greek uniformity on all nations resulted in various national stocks (Syrian, Armenian, and Egyptian, for instance) adopting any "heresy" that chanced to be on the tapis, as a protest against what they regarded as "Greek dictation." While the dispute, both doctrinal and national, was still being fought out, the great Mussulman invasions began; and the nationalities in question cheerfully accepted the Mohammedan rule, which gave to them a religious freedom which the Greek Christian Empire had denied. The Arab, and the Turk who followed him, were perfectly willing to see their Christian subjects divided as much as they liked; and recognized the Armenian, Syrian, Chaldaean, and Coptic nations as "*millets*" in their empire; a "*millet*" being the technical term for a subject nation of Christians,{81} organized (as they always were) in a church, under their own hierarchy of Patriarch, bishops, and clergy. Thus these various national churches, all called heretical by both Greeks and Latins, continued to exist

under Turkish rule.



THE "PICTURE ROCKS" OF BAVIAN.

No. 4

In the later days of the Turkish Empire Roman Catholic missions brought education to these Christians; and the Roman Church allowed such portions of these old national churches as could be brought to submit to papal supremacy, to retain their own hierarchy, and their ancient services, expurgated to some extent. All these "Uniat" or "reconciled" bodies are, of course, subject to the Pope, but their members do not, normally, communicate with one another. Historically, one rejoices at the preservation of so many ancient rites and bodies, and the method was sound policy also from the point of view of the proselytizing agents of the Roman Church; for both Nestorian and Jacobite might both be brought to acknowledge the supremacy of a distant Pope, if that Pope's agents had somewhat to give in the way of protection or education, but neither could ever be brought to associate with "that other" whose tenets his church existed to repudiate.

Thus, with sound prudence, rules about diocesan jurisdiction that hold elsewhere are dropped in the Middle East; and Mosul boasts at least three Roman Catholic bishops, namely, a Chaldaean or "Nestorian Uniat"[39] Patriarch, with several bishops under him; a Syrian Catholic or "Jacobite Uniat"[39a] bishop, subordinate to the Patriarch of that church at Beyrout; and an "Apostolic Delegate," or Papal Legate, who exercises a general superintendence over all Roman Catholic bishops in Mesopotamia, but has direct spiritual jurisdiction over only the handful of Frenchmen who reside actually in Mosul, and any other "Christian of the Latin rite" who may chance to come that way.

There is also a strong colony of Jews in the city, still living in their ancient quarter; where they have lived, they say (with every appearance of truth), since Sargon of Assyria brought their ancestors from captured Samaria in the eighth century B.C. Like all of their kind they are{82} traders, for the place is a centre of local trade. Still, most of the wares in the market, other than raw material like wool and oak-galls, come originally from Manchester or Reading; and one doubts if it would still be possible to find in Mosul any of that fine "muslin" which has carried the name of the city over all the world.

One branch of the local export trade to which we may refer is that in liquorice, a plant that grows wild freely on the plain. The fact that European merchants were anxious to buy it caused much wonderment; but presently the real explanation got known and was accepted by everybody. "King George of England likes nothing so much as sucking liquorice; and he has sent twenty-five millions of English sovereigns to secure a supply that shall last him all his life."

On the left bank of the Tigris, opposite to Mosul, lies Nineveh, and the one place is approached from the other by a bridge that is thoroughly characteristic of Turkey; it

goes, that is to say, some two-thirds of the way over the river, crossing just that part of the bed which is dry for most of the year. As the real channel is approached, the bridge stops abruptly, and a series of pontoon-like barges takes the place of it. This bridge of boats is itself removed in flood-time, and the traveller may then, given good luck, get over in the course of an hour, with the help of a very clumsy ferry-boat. Bridges, it may be said, are regarded in Turkey rather as natural impediments to travel than as assistants to it; and the fact that "there are bridges on that road" is always made an excuse for asking twice the usual fare for a carriage.

The bridge of boats at Mosul is civic property; and is hired out annually to anyone who will farm it, for a very substantial sum. The lessee is expected to keep the whole bridge in order, and charges a toll on every man or animal that crosses the bridge.

Nominally the rent of the bridge is spent, of course, upon the needs of the city, and is handed over to the administrative council for that end. Still, when a city has no pavements or lamps or drainage, or any of the numerous{83} unnecessary things that the West indulges in because it has more money than it knows what to do with, after all it has no needs.

A city, too, is composed of citizens, argue the councillors; and what is spent for the needs of worthy citizens is, in a sense, spent for the benefit of the city; and what citizens can be worthier than those who toil daily at the administrative council for the benefit of their fellows? So the bridge rent is spent on those worthy objects; and as yet nobody has raised any other objection than that he was himself left out of the sharing of the plunder. What the narrow-minded Western calls corruption will not cease till public opinion condemns it; and what passes for public opinion in Turkish provinces now can imagine no other way of getting anything done.

Musing thus on problems of municipal reform we cross the bridge and ride over the mile or so of flat foreshore, that now separates the river from the walls of Nineveh. Once the Tigris washed the base of Koyunjik, the site of Sennacherib's palace, and formed an impregnable barrier against all assaults from that side, but the day dawned at last of which an old prophecy had spoken, when the river joined the besiegers, and betrayed the city to its foes. A great flood swept away the walls, leaving wide breaches all along the frontage; and as the waters subsided, lo the river had cut a new channel, and the whole of the side which it had guarded lay completely open to attack.

Wherefore King Sardanapalus (who was not Assurbanipal, but a successor of his named Sinsariskun) gathered together all his treasure and his wives and his children, and died as a king should die, in the flames of his own palace.

Nineveh fell in the year 608 B.C., overthrown by Cyaxares, the king of the Medes, and his better known ally, Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. She had been hard pressed more than once before, but had triumphed eventually over each successive peril. The ultimate explanation of this final overthrow was indeed nothing more or less than the exhaustion caused by generations of conquest. There were no true Assyrians left —{84}only a half-bred race, the fruit of incessant inter-marriages; and when they succumbed, they had no power of recuperation. "Nineveh is laid waste, who shall bemoan her? Her people is scattered upon the mountains, and no man gathereth them."

There is but little above ground at Nineveh now. The long walls remain, looking much like derelict railway embankments; and the great moat, fifty yards in width, and twenty feet deep, into which the waters of the river Khozr could be turned at will, still girdles the city round. Sunk as it is in conglomerate rock, this moat is a monument of

patient labour. Of the two great mounds where the King's palaces stood, Koyunjik and Nebi Yunus, the former and larger has probably yielded the last of its important secrets to the British Museum. It is well, however, to remember that the same was said of Karnak, in Egypt, and the richest of all finds have come to light there since then. You can never be sure that you have got all that is in a mound, till, *more fossorum Germanicorum*, you have passed the whole of it through a fine sieve.

Still, the search has been fairly thorough. The excavators however, left one of the great human-headed bulls above ground; and it may be of interest to record that this monument (which was presumably the property of the British Museum) first generously parted with its head to mend a mill; and was subsequently sold for the sum of three shillings and six pence by the Vali of Mosul (not worthy old Tahir Pasha, but his predecessor), and burnt into lime by its purchaser.

The second mound, Nebi Yunus—alas, one can but gnash one's teeth in envy and anger when one knows that the favourite palace of Esarhaddon lies beneath it—that king whose smaller house elsewhere has yielded the finest specimens of Assyrian art yet known. And this, his *chef d'œuvre*, cannot be examined, because of the mosque of Nebi Yunus (Jonah the Prophet) that stands in the midst of the Turkoman village that crowns it. The Prophet will be very angry if you disturb him, say the Mussulmans,{85} and will take vengeance dire![40] If it were indeed Jonah that lies there, there might be something in the argument; for the Prophet is known to have had a temper. But it is not he. After all, seeing that his prophecy of the destruction of Nineveh was not fulfilled, the top of the mound that covers the ruins of the city is perhaps the one spot of earth where it is quite impossible for him to be buried! As a matter of fact, the mosque is an old Nestorian church, once the cathedral of that body in the days when their independent

patriarchate was in Mosul; and the occupant of the tomb is John the Lame, a worthy Patriarch of the thirteenth century, who now gets compensation for a life of hardship in his posthumous honours as Jewish Prophet and Mussulman Saint.

Mar John the Lame was a friend to knowledge and learning in his life; and it must be a real annoyance to the good old man to think that his corpse has been made into an obstacle to both of them now that he has done with it!

Only one of the treasures of the palace has ever come to light, viz. a pair of bronze oxen, found in the process of cleaning out the well in the court of the mosque. These "idols" were promptly melted down; and they now, in the form of a window grating, keep thieves from a gentleman's house in Mosul.

The old order is changing in Mosul as elsewhere; or will change when the Baghdad Railway comes and brings light and sanitation into its picturesque corruption. The domination of the present governing clique will go, and one hopes that something better will take its place. Will whatever happens to come be a real improvement on the open bribery of Sabonji, and the humorous tolerance of Tahir Pasha? Some things will mend. The small merchant, for instance, will no longer be made to buy his stock from the local member of the administrative council; and warned that if he dares to import for himself from Aleppo, that caravan, at any rate, will not pass the Shammar Arabs. The youthful{86} heroes of that tribe will no longer be told by the old men "in the good old days of our fathers, a young fellow had to kill his lion before he thought himself man enough to take a wife. Now you must, at any rate, rob a caravan." All that will be to the good. Still, the experience of towns like Beyrout and Smyrna suggests that, after all, the known evils of the East may be preferable to the unknown crop that will spring from a confusion of East and West.{87}

CHAPTER V

THE TEMPLE OF THE DEVIL

(SHEIKH ADI)

WE have long been partial to pilgrimage. Partly because we love all old habits. Because "it was so our fathers did in the days of old;" and because, quite apart from that intrinsically "excellent reason," we have yet another reason which may well be thought "good enough." We have found that the original promoters of that pastime were people of singular discrimination, and endowed with a positive genius for exploiting attractive resorts. The shrines to which they sent their penitents are so many realms of delight to the vagrant pleasure-seeker; and who could pick out for himself a more ideal holiday paradise than Lourdes or Monserrat or Covadonga or Rocamadour?

We have ranged in quest of palms and scallop shells through the length and breadth of Christendom, from the Holy Sepulchre in the east to Santiago de Compostela in the west; and nowhere have we been disappointed of receiving our temporal reward. Yet we feel it is rather hard measure to be grudged all ulterior benefits—to be told that, having roamed "without intention," our spiritual profits are *nil*.

However, such disqualification affords us some compensating latitude. If our gain be exclusively temporal we can run but little spiritual risk. The less respectable shrines may prove just as eligible as the orthodox, and we can visit Mecca and Benares with as much immunity as Rome. *Flectere si nequeo Superos, Acheronta movebo*; and a call on the witch of Endor will at least assure us a thrill. In which dangerous frame of mind it becomes an overwhelming{88} attraction to a professed patron of

pilgrimages, to find himself within easy visiting distance of the only temple extant which is specifically and avowedly dedicated to the Author of Evil Himself.

Nearly every form of religion which has yet been known to man seems at some time or other to have struck root in the soil of Mesopotamia; and there are but few of the number that have left no stumps or fossils to remind us of the days when they were yet flourishing in their pride. Some have bequeathed us the ruins of their temples, their sacrificial ash heaps, their votive tablets, or the images of their gods. Some survive but in fragments of fantastic folk-lore, still lingering on ineradicably as the parasites of more modern creeds. But one of the oldest and weirdest of all is still a living reality—the religion of the Yezidis or "Devil-worshippers" who congregate principally in the *vilayet* of Mosul.

"Devil-worshippers" they are indeed; for they themselves do not scruple to admit that the Being whom they seek to propitiate is actually identical with the *Sheitan* of the Christians and Moslems and Jews. But, fortunately for the morals of the neighbourhood, their homage stops short of imitation. Theirs is a religion of Faith, and not of Works. They are under no obligation to make evil their good according to the boast of Milton's Satan; but only to "respect the great place" of their Divinity, and see to it that he is "sometime honoured for his burning throne."

Thus, though they are accused of many enormities,[41] it does not appear that they are actually worse in theory, or half so vicious in practice, as many of the most blameless of their "true-believing" neighbours: and "good Christian men who are stable in the faith" may adventure themselves{89} into their Vale of Devils with no more material misgivings than worthy Sir John Mandeville of old.

The Yezidis form one of the recognized *millets*, or subject religious sects, existing in the Turkish Empire. But

recognition in their case by no means implies toleration. They are universally abhorred as outcasts—almost as "untouchables"—like the *cagots* of the Pyrenees, or the lowest *pariahs* of Hindustan. A Christian is a "dog" to a Moslem, and a Jew ranks many octaves lower; but there is no room on the chromatic scale to show the position of a Yezidi: he is the sort of human being that is less regarded than a beast.

A Yezidi crossed our path some five or six miles from Mosul. He gave us a very wide berth, keeping quite a hundred yards away. But it chanced that his line lay to windward; and our escort rode at him furiously, fairly bellowing with indignation. How dared he have the effrontery to intrude his unclean carcass "betwixt the wind and our nobility?"

And presently another Yezidi actually tacked himself on to our party, following us (at a very humble distance) for two or three hours along the road. "It would be a good deed to kill the dog," was our *zaptieh's* muttered comment; "but while he is under the *Effendi's* shadow, I suppose I must let him alone!"

Yet withal there is a spice of fear in the contempt which is felt for the Yezidis. They are "ower sibb" to the Devil to be quite safe subjects for abuse. They seem to be regarded in much the same light as witches used to be by our own seventeenth-century ancestors. It is virtue to revile and maltreat them: and by daylight, with a sufficient mob to back you, you may feel secure from their resentment. But it is another matter altogether to pass their door alone after dark!

The Yezidis form a considerable community numbering in all some 150,000; for about 500 villages own allegiance to their *Mira*,[42] and there are many detached colonies{90} residing in alien towns. These villages are widely distributed—isolated for the most part singly among the surrounding Kurds and Christians. Some are as far west as

Aleppo; some as far north as Tiflis (where all the town scavengers are Yezidis); some as far east as Teheran. Their nucleus is in the Sinjar mountains, in the desert south-west of Mosul; where they are secured from invasion by the barricades of rock, and the waterless wastes which environ them. But the central shrine of their faith, the Jerusalem of their vows and offerings, is the cryptic Temple of Sheikh Adi, hidden just within the fringe of the northern mountains which overlook the great Mosul plain.

It was late on an autumn evening that we neared the last stage of our journey thither. We had quitted the plains about mid-day; and our course had lain for some miles along a sparsely cultivated valley, tucked in behind the outermost ripple which the mountains fling down upon the wold. On our right lay this barbican ridge, from the crest of which one might look forth across all the plain of Tigris; while on our left the hills rose higher, more rugged and more precipitous—a second, but still a subordinate, breastwork of the lordly Oberland behind.

Here and there the solitude was punctuated by a squalid Kurdish village whose inhabitants were thriftily using the tents which had served for their camps all the summer, to hood in their stacks of fodder against the expected winter snows. And one of these—Ain Sufni "Shipwell,"—perched on a traverse of high ground which is piled right across the valley is pointed out by Yezidi tradition as being the building place of the Ark. Here the main valley still trends forward; but, as we descended from the village, our guides doubled back to the left and dived into a masked ravine which had hitherto lurked invisible behind a shoulder of the heights.

Wide should be the gate and broad the way which leadeth to—the shrine of MELEK TAÜS; but the glen in question is shaggy and narrow and tortuous, tangled with clumps of tamarisk, and cumbered with water-worn boulders the jetsam of the winter floods. Since noon the

sky had been overcast, and now a dreary drizzle had smudged all the{91} landscape into a grey monochrome. Our jaded beasts sprawled and stumbled disheartedly over the wet and slippery stones.

Soon our path began edging up towards a *col* in the ridge to the right of us, where a little Kurdish village hung limply over the saddle, and a curtain of lowering clouds trailed its ragged fringe across the gap. But just as we started the ascent, we perceived that the true end of the valley lay round an elbow in the opposite direction; and at its head, conspicuous against the dark hillside above the trees which lay matted in the hollow, rose the tall pale cone of a remote and isolated building—the "Great Mascot" of the Yezidis.[43]

How effectively the stage was set for that last mile of our Black pilgrimage! Not the least detail seemed lacking to enhance the eeriness of the scene. The dusk was rapidly lowering, the gorge grew narrower and deeper; and the gnarled boughs which overhung the pathway turned the twilight almost into night. A sodden carpet of fallen leaves muffled the clatter of the horse-hoofs; and no sound was heard but the bubbling of the rivulet, and the steady plash of the bloated raindrops that had gathered on the twigs of the trees. High overhead on our right towered the wan gaunt walls of the Satanic monastery: but not a voice nor a glimmer of light bespoke the presence of any inmates; and as we stumbled up the broken stairs, between crumbling walls and under ruinous arches, we felt like Sintram in his goblin valley or Childe Roland approaching the Dark Tower.

By the time we had reached the further angle of the building we had risen to the level of its terraces; and as we wheeled into the little fore-court, the general uncanniness of our surroundings received its finishing touch. The gates stood closed before us, and nowhere was there a sign of any living creature—but in every niche and crevice there

flickered a tiny fairy lamp! The wandering tourist in County Wicklow who was taken to task by an infuriated landlord for trespassing in the "Devil's Glen," pleaded in{92} extenuation that he "had never expected to meet the proprietor;" but to us at this particular juncture, the apparition of "The Proprietor" would have seemed the most natural event in the world!

Our retinue appeared less affected. Perhaps they were not so impressionable; or more probably they confided in our superior magic, and argued *a La Española* that we "knew a point more than the Fiend." Our henchman strode boldly to the gates and hammered upon them lustily. For some time he woke only the echoes: and when at length a voice answered, the owner thereof was evidently none too anxious to open. In this land it is rarely an angel that one entertains unaware after dark![44] The magic word *Ingiliz*, however, proved a veritable "Open Sesame." "*Ingiliz!*" repeated the unseen janitor in a tone of delighted amazement. In a minute the gates creaked open; and a couple of priests in dirty white gaberdines with scarlet turbans and sashes, grinning all over their bearded faces, were amiably beckoning us in.

There is indeed good sound policy in the readiness with which the subject races of Turkey are disposed to welcome a European visitor. His presence under their roof will certainly secure them from raiding for that one night at any rate; and the suspicion that they have influential foreign friends will "increase their name" permanently among their truculent neighbours, and serve as a sort of protection for several weeks to come.

A steep and crazy stone staircase turned down just inside the gateway; but our long-suffering mountain-bred beasts tripped down it as neatly as rope-dancers. Through a door on our right, as we passed, we caught a glimpse of the interior of a big vaulted guard room, where a party of Yezidi men and women were grouped around a blazing

bonfire. The ruddy glare of the flames and the murky smoke-wreaths eddying overhead, suggested forcibly that these minions{93} of Lucifer were sampling a model Inferno; but we slipped past their Malebolge unobserved. Our conductors led us along the lower terrace, and assigned us lodgings in a tower abutting on the wall of the temple—the chamber (as they informed us) which was always reserved for the use of the High Priest of their sect, Ali Beg himself, whenever he paid one of his periodical visits to his tribal shrine.

It was a good-sized lofty room, roofed with a pointed stone vault: but it boasted no window; and apparently no chimney, for the fire that was lit for our benefit soon filled all the space above the level of the door lintel with a dense and suffocating smoke. To us as we squatted on the floor this was no particular hardship; but a hand raised overhead reached into a warm smoky stratum, and if we rose to cross the room we had to bend double under pain of asphyxiation. The Yezidis seem more callous to smoke even than the Kurds and Syrians. The latter do generally provide a hole in the roof above the fire.

The young prior of the monastery, a nephew of Ali Beg, played the part of host. He had been preferred to his post by his uncle, to whom he pays a fixed composition (equivalent to £120 *per annum*) for the privilege of receiving the offerings of the faithful whom he entertains at the shrine. The entertainment which he provided for us consisted of the local pancake bread and a big dish of lentils; on which we supped very composedly, albeit we had no "long spoons." Then followed coffee served in a brazen jug with a gigantic spout like the beak of a toucan: and, after a cigarette or two, our host took leave of us; while we and our *posse comitatus* disposed ourselves to sleep on the floor.

Our earliest thought the next morning was to inspect the Diabolical Temple; for the Yezidis, unlike their

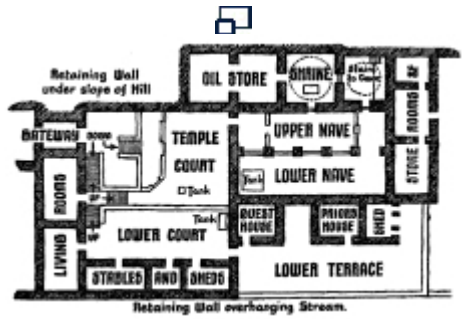
Mohammedan neighbours, are quite willing to exhibit their shrine. The sun was rising brightly as we emerged into the daylight; and the wakening glen in its rich autumn colouring looked a very different place from the gloomy gully up which we had crept the night before.

There is no village at Sheikh Adi. The place consists simply of the temple and its appurtenances, forming, in fact,{94} a monastery, though it is not actually so called. The buildings hang along the steep brae-side which forms the left bank of the river; the uppermost tier being notched deeply into the slope, and the lower terraced out boldly above the margin of the burn. The temple rises in the centre of the upper tier, conspicuous for the fluted spires which form the roofs of the sanctuaries. These fluted conical spires are a distinguishing characteristic of Yezidi architecture, and their appearance, on any building is strong *primâ facie* evidence of Yezidi origin.

All above and around the monastery the hillside is spangled with scores of rude little oratories, mostly in a ruinous condition. These were erected sometimes by individual worshippers and sometimes by communities. The founder of such a chapel is thought to acquire singular merit; and it is held that, at his death, his chantry will be transported with him to paradise and serve as his heavenly mansion in the life to come. A lamp is lit in each of them by the temple priests at sundown, and at the same time other lamps are lit all over the temple, thus forming the necromantic illumination which so startled us the previous night. They only continue burning for about half an hour; but we chanced to arrive just in time to get the full effect.

Within the main gateway of the monastery a flight of eight or ten steps leads down into a little sunken quadrangle; and the opposite side of this is occupied by the façade of the temple—a plain square wall of ashlar, unpierced by any window, but having a small arched doorway placed near the corner on the left. Many of the

stones in this façade have queer cabalistic patterns, rudely incised in the surface so as to leave the device in low relief. The priests insist that these are all meaningless—mere bits of fanciful ornament introduced by the Christian builders:[45] but{95}{96} though it is likely enough that the original meaning of them is forgotten, it is manifestly absurd to pretend either that they never had any, or that none is attributed to them now. There are no Christian symbols among them; and the devices which recur most frequently represent a hatchet and a comb:[46] but the most ominous and the most prominent of all is the famous Snake, which is carved in relief on the door jamb, and which receives the peculiar attention of being kept carefully blacked.



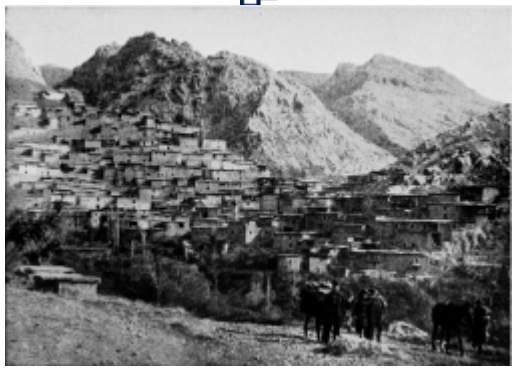
THE YEZIDI TEMPLE AT SHEIKH ADI

Three or four Yezidi worshippers were making their round of the quadrangle, prostrating themselves before certain niches and at several other recognized points. They devoutly kissed the threshold of the door, and several of the stones in the walls (by no means always the carved ones), but we did not see any of them pay particular homage to the snake.

The priests were prepared for our visit, and were waiting at the door to receive us. They at once admitted us to the temple, first begging us to remove our shoes. This action is to be regarded as mere politeness, not as “bowing down in

the house of Rimmon;" for it is customary to remove the shoes in Turkey, even when only entering a room.[47]

The body of the temple consists of twin naves, divided longitudinally by a pointed arcade, and roofed with two pointed barrel vaults. The general effect of the architecture is very similar to that of a rude early thirteenth-century church in the mountain districts of England. The naves lie due east and west; and possibly this Orientation was intentional, for certain traces of sun worship do survive in the Yezidi creed. But more probably the lines of the building were dictated by the nature of the site, for the longer axis would naturally run parallel with stream and hill. Moreover any significance that might be attached to the arrangement is altogether discounted by the fact that the sanctuary is placed, not at the eastern end, but{97} in the centre of the northern side. This is a plan which is frequently followed in the more easterly Christian churches; and which indicates that the builders adopted as their model, not the Roman basilica, but the Persian Audience Hall.



AKRA.

From the south-west. The figures are those of Rabban Werda and others of our suite.

No. 5

The floor of the southern nave is three steps lower than

that of the northern; and at its western end is a square tank of running water, sunk below the level of the floor. Ceremonial ablutions have a prominent place in the ritual of Yezidi worship. There is a second tiny tank in the quadrangle: and a third (evidently fed by the overflow of the tank in the nave) just under the south-western angle of the temple, on the level of the lower terrace. A dwarf wall between the arcade pillars fences off the central bays of the upper nave, thus enclosing a sort of presbytery in front of the opening to the sanctuary.

At the eastern end we turned to the left through a door in the northern wall, and entered the square chamber under the smaller and more easterly of the two conical spires. From this we passed back into the sanctuary itself; a larger square chamber, situated under the larger spire, and thus, placed practically in the centre of the northern nave wall. [48] A low doorway, closed with an iron grille, opens from the nave into this sanctuary; and immediately behind the opening stands a sort of ark, rather smaller than the shrine of St. Alban, and completely shrouded in red drapery. We were led up to it, but bidden not to touch it: so we stood round solemnly, and gazed.

"What is in it?" we asked our interpreter, the Syrian Deacon, Werda—a man of some education, who is generally superior to the superstitions of his race. But in this Domdaniel of Sorcery even his assurance was wavering—"I will tell you later," he replied nervously. "I cannot say it in this place." It was not till we were safe again in the quadrangle that he approached us with much circumspection,{98} and confided to us in an awestruck whisper, "the King of the Peacocks is in that big chest!"

Melek Taüs, "the King of the Peacocks," is the Yezidi euphemism for Sheitan; who of course must never be referred to by the latter disparaging name.[49] His image in the form of a peacock is regarded as the Yezidi Palladium; and it was his principal image which was kept in that red-

draped shrine.

There are seven images or *sānjāks*[50] in the charge of the Yezidi priesthood. One is always kept at Sheikh Adi; and the rest go on circuit in the villages, to be exhibited to the faithful, and to receive the temple tithes.[51] Their progress is somewhat precarious; for the Kurds (when they can) like to capture them, thus combining pleasure and profit with a parade of religious zeal. It is probably one of these *sanjaks* which is now in the British Museum; and, "if he had guessed that King George would like it," Mar Shimun "would have been delighted to make him a present of another," which was known to have been straying about Tyari a year or two before. The Kurds themselves roundly assert that they carried off the actual headquarters image when they looted the temple in 1892; but the priests contend that it had been already placed in hiding, and that the plunderers found only a dummy. The Kurds would of course say they took it, even if they did not; and the priests would equally of course deny it, even if they did. Both alternatives are equally probable; and the image has always been secreted so jealously that any identification is impossible.[52] There is therefore nothing to prevent us from believing whichever we choose.

But although *Melek Taüs* no doubt is the dominant {99} guardian of Sheikh Adi, we feel that behind his presentment there broods an older tutelary shade. For when we quitted the larger sanctuary, and passed back again into the more eastern one, "Rabbi Mr. Wigram" headed at once for a small door in a corner, from whence a steep stone staircase plunged down into the bowels of the rock. A priest had planted himself in front of that door, making himself as broad as possible, and valiantly trying to mask it; and when he found concealment impossible, he pointedly bowed us away. They had shown us the shrine of *Melek Taüs*; but here was something which they could not show us. Here was one secret of Sheikh Adi which must be

kept inviolate still.

What would they have said, we wonder, had they been told that one of their visitors had already actually penetrated into that Holy of Holies? Would they have hailed him as a prophet? Would they have murdered him for sacrilege? Or would they have compromised matters by flatly refusing to believe? We discreetly kept our own counsel; but the thing had been done notwithstanding. And the story of how it happened needs a few explanatory remarks.

In the year 1892 there came a new *Vali* to Mosul—a sanguine and active "Reformer" whose name was Osman Bey. He had set out from Constantinople equipped with a Radical "Program" and his programme (as is usual with programmes) was planned on an extensive scale. He had to do just three things—to cure the Arabs of Nomadism; to make the Kurds pay their taxes; and finally to induce the Yezidis to discard their heathenish superstition. The first problem floored him promptly, for the Arabs decamped to the desert; and the Kurdish chiefs eyed him pretty blankly when he proceeded to propound Problem II. But when he got to "thirdly and lastly," and invited their co-operation, the worthy fellows cheered up amazingly and found things looked feasible after all. Taxation was much less intolerable when viewed in relation to its context, for the "Peaceable Persuasion" of the Yezidis would leave them a profit on the deal.

Accordingly all through the *vilayet* the unhappy Yezidis were attacked and plundered; their women were carried{100} into captivity, their men were tortured and slain. And while the Government troops were ravaging the plain villages, Sheikh Adi itself (hitherto immune from such visitations) was completely ransacked by the Kurds. It was not till after sixteen years that the poor proscribed Yezidis were reinstated. Until the general amnesty at the revolution they remained in exile from their shrine.

Consequently when "Rabbi Mr. Wigram" visited the place in 1907 he found it only tenanted by the Moslem Mollah in charge.

The Mollah allowed him to go anywhere, scoffing valiantly at Yezidi superstitions; and through that gloomy doorway the investigator accordingly went. But afterwards the sceptic admitted that *down there* he had never ventured; and had never in the least expected to see his visitor come up again alive!

Unfortunately at the time the searcher failed to realize the unique nature of his opportunity and consequently did not push his explorations as thoroughly as he otherwise would. It was very dark down the staircase, and he was only provided with matches. But it seemed to him that he had penetrated into a vast natural cavern, teeming with rills of trickling water—the birthplace of the sacred spring, which feeds the temple tanks, and forms the main source of the rivulet which flows down the glen below.

And here, perhaps, we have the key to the time-honoured sanctity of Sheikh Adi. It was primarily a seat of that fountain worship which is one of the earliest of all known cults. *Melek Taüs* himself was but a later accretion, though now he has usurped pre-eminence; and even yet his worshippers are half-conscious of a god behind their god. Sacred fountains by the dozen, and sacred trees by the score, may still be met with in these outlandish regions. But in Christian and Moslem villages they are reverenced somewhat shamefacedly. Among the followers of a lower religion the old superstition has retained a firmer hold.

The Yezidis possess no systematized religion woven by some great teacher into one harmonious whole. They make shift instead with a bewildering agglomeration of superstitions{101} pieced together into an amazing patchwork. The central article of their creed is that propitiation of the Evil Principle which was originally the conception of the Persian dualists; but with this is

incorporated the world-old Nature worship of trees and fountains and fire and of all the host of heaven; upon it are grafted innumerable later doctrines derived from the Jews the Christians and the Moslems; and apparently it was by the Gnostics that the whole medley was finally moulded into something approaching its present form.

Their reverence for *Sheikh Shams-ed-din*, the sun, is evinced by the fact that they daily kiss the ground at the spot where his rays first rest; that they adore him at rising and setting, and sacrifice white oxen at his shrine. A somewhat similar homage is also paid to the moon; and they always bury their dead facing towards the north star. Their reverence for fountains of water appears in their ceremonial lustrations, including the baptism of their children in the temple tank at Sheikh Adi. Fire they so far honour that they deem it impiety to spit into it; and perhaps a survival of serpent worship may be traced in the famous black snake.

From the Persians they borrowed the conception of a good and an evil principle; and probably also their belief in the transmigration of souls. From the Jews they learned to identify Ahriman, the evil principle, with Satan; to practise circumcision, and blood offerings, and other points of the Mosaic ritual;[53] and to reverence the writings of the Old Testament, which they consider equally authoritative with the New Testament and the Koran. They share our Christian belief in the divinity of the Founder of our religion, albeit they consider *Melek Taüs* a greater divinity than Him. They respect the Sign of the Cross; but perhaps not exclusively as a Christian symbol, for the use of that sign was established even in pre-Christian days. Other tenets they have borrowed from Islam; for they regard Mohammed{102} as a prophet, and Mecca as a holy place; and texts from the Koran are engraved on the walls of their temple. Moreover they hold that their sacred spring is derived from the well Zemzem, whose waters Sheikh Adi

miraculously conducted to their present fount.

Many points of this weird belief have no doubt been adopted piecemeal, in the hope of obtaining toleration from their Mohammedan lords. But if such was their hope it was futile. Their admitted reverence for Sheitan constitutes an abomination which neither Moslem nor Christian can condone. Thus their lot has been always oppression and often the bitterest persecution. How can such a strange compound superstition have inspired them with their heroic fortitude?

If the truth of a creed can be gauged by the number and constancy of its martyrs, then the place we should yield to the Yezidis must be one of the highest of all. Small as their sect has always been, they can count their martyrs by hundreds of thousands. And seldom indeed has any Yezidi of full age been known to abjure his religion, either under stress of torment or through fear of death. The massacre of 1892 was but the latest (and one of the mildest) of a long list of similar inflictions. Less than fifty years previously all the Yezidis of the Sheikhan were driven from their villages by a great irruption of Kurds under the Beg of Rowandiz, and fled for refuge to Mosul. The flooded Tigris cut them off; and so many thousands were massacred by their pursuers upon the site of Nineveh that the principal mound over Sennacherib's palace acquired the ominous name of Kouyunjik—"the shambles of the sheep." The tale of earlier massacres runs back to the very dawn of their history. Even Sinjar has not always proved a sanctuary, though there they have been less hard pressed.

But still the sect lives on; and (what is stranger yet) it occasionally attracts proselytes! Why a Christian should turn Moslem, we can understand—at least he ensures worldly advancement. But what conceivable benefit can he look to acquire by turning Yezidi? Unless indeed he is tired of life, and has a conscientious objection to suicide. {103}

One peculiar privilege, however, has recently been conceded to the Yezidis. They have gained that exemption from military service which Kurds and Christians earnestly desire. This was done not exactly in kindness to them, but more for the comfort of the army. For, about a dozen times a day, every Moslem is accustomed to "take refuge with Allah from Sheitan the stoned:" and a Yezidi who hears such blasphemy has a choice of just two alternatives; either he may kill the blasphemer, or he may commit suicide himself!

Mohammed in the Koran draws a very emphatic distinction between those unbelievers who are "men of a book," and those who are not; between the Christians and Jews, who follow a written revelation; and the idolaters, who follow tradition alone. The former may be admitted to tribute; but the latter are expressly condemned to extermination.

Now the Yezidis also are in fact "men of a book;" though this would not probably be considered much extenuation for "worshipping Sheitan." But for a very long period they guarded their book so jealously as actually to invite the pains and penalties of being supposed to have none. Two sacred books, however, they have; the *Kitab el Aswad*, or Black Book,[54] dating from about the tenth century; and the *Kitab el Jilwa*, or Book of Enlightenment, which dates from about the thirteenth; and from these we are able to gather some of the principal articles of their creed.

The Yezidis believe in a Supreme Being—Yazdan, "the Most High." But to Him they pay no worship. He is the Lord of Heaven, and takes no account of earth. From His name in all probability they derive their own appellation of Yezidis; though the Moslems (or at least the Shiites) declare that they inherit it from Yezid ibn Mo'awiya, the murderer of Hosein, and see in it an additional argument for persecuting them.[55]

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From *Yazdan* emanated seven Great Spirits, of whom *Melek Taüs* was the first and most powerful. To him was committed the creation of the world; and the governance of it for 10,000 years, of which 4000 still remain to run. *Melek Taüs* is an evil and a fallen spirit; but not fallen beyond redemption. He is a sort of celestial Absalom—vicious, tyrannical, rebellious; but secure of ultimate pardon and rehabilitation. "Shall there not at length come a time when the Chief of the Archangels shall be restored to his first pre-eminence? And will he not then be mindful of the poor Yezidis, who alone of all mankind never cursed him in his disgrace?"

There is something distinctly quaint in this picture of a reclaimed Satan, still cherishing a faint grudge against those who denounced him in his unregenerate days.

Melek Isa (Jesus) is the second of the Great Spirits; and He too shall reign for 10,000 years when *Melek Taüs'* reign is done. The story of His incarnation and passion is accepted as told in the Christian scriptures; but it is held that this, His first, coming was premature and that so He failed to break the power of evil. He did not, however, die upon the Cross, *Melek Taüs* snatched Him away, leaving only a phantom in His room.[56]

The Yezidis render to *Melek Isa* a sort of secondary worship. His reign is not yet; and being good He is not so formidable as evil. Thus at their great feast they sacrifice one sheep to Him, while to *Melek Taüs* they sacrifice seven. *Melek Isa* is merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, but *Melek Taüs* is a jealous and exacting god.

Sheikh Adi is a semi-mythical personage who may be described as the Yezidi Prophet. He is sometimes identified with Mar Adai (St. Thaddeus) the Apostle of the Christians;{105} but there seems some historical evidence that he lived in the tenth century, and that he was originally a Magian who had fled from Aleppo when the Magian cult

was suppressed. He was probably the author or compiler of the sacred books; and is said to have been the first who taught disciples. According to some traditions he is considered almost divine; and at the Last Day he will carry all the Yezidis to heaven in a tray on his head, and pass them through unquestioned. But according to another legend he was a mere mortal, who had in life bitter experience of the devilment of his peculiar deity. For while he was gone on pilgrimage to Mecca, *Melek Taüs* personated him among his disciples; dwelling with them, instructing them, and at last ascending visibly to Heaven. Thus when poor Sheikh Adi returned he was promptly slain as an impostor; and then *Melek Taüs*, reappearing, confessed the trick that he had played, and gave orders that the ill-used devotee was henceforth to be honoured as a saint.

The Yezidis have a regular hierarchy of seven orders of priesthood. They hold a great annual feast at Sheikh Adi in October; which is continued for eight days, and is attended by all the faithful who can come. Layard was present on two such occasions, and shared in the feasting and merry-making; but no unbeliever has ever been permitted to witness the rites and ceremonies enacted within the temple itself. Pilgrimage to Sheikh Adi is incumbent on every Yezidi; but he is not commanded to pray; and he leaves that duty to his priests. Fasting can also be performed by deputy; and a group of Yezidis will select one of their number to do all their fasting for them, confessing to him the acts which need expiation, and paying him a capitation fee for carrying out the corresponding penances.

The Yezidis understand the nature of an oath, but the oath must be properly administered; and, lest any of the sect should appear as witnesses in our own courts of justice, it may be convenient to state exactly how the thing is done. A circle is drawn round the man to whom the oath is propounded, and he is told “All within that circle is the

property of *Melek Taüs*. Now answer falsely if you dare! {106}" One would have thought that to the Father of Lies falsehood would be the one thing most pleasing. But apparently when you are put to your purgation it is most emphatically otherwise. So we may conclude that the Prince of Darkness is really a gentleman after all.

The distinctive costume of the men consists of white tunic, trousers and jacket, with a scarlet turban and sash. The women wear the same costume, except that the tunic is longer and reaches nearly to the ankle; and they also have an oblong red mantle, draped from the left shoulder under the right arm.

We quitted Sheikh Adi in the course of the forenoon, the young prior accompanying us to the monastery gate in order to bid us farewell. He would accept no payment for our entertainment, representing that it was the custom of the monastery to keep open house for its visitors;[57] but "out of love for us he could not refuse" the gift that we proffered instead. We followed a very steep and rugged pathway, clambering out of the glen up the hillside immediately opposite; and from the notch at the summit we got our last view of that unhallowed Hoodoo House, and saw once more to the southward the ocean-like levels of Mosul.

Being now so deeply entered in devilry we had resolved to top off our orgy by paying our respects to the Satanic Pontiff, Ali Beg the *Mira* of the Yezidis, whose home lay close to our road. A descent even rougher than the ascent led us down to the terrace of heath land from which the mountains arise; and here, on a sort of cape jutting out over the lower plain country, we came upon the *Mira's* castle—a large defensible house with a walled courtyard. A beautifully clear little river issues from a spring just above it, and girdles the base of the hill on which the "castle" stands; and along the banks of the stream lies the Yezidi village of Baadri, one of their principal settlements in the

district of Sheikhan.

The castle seemed pretty well garrisoned; for plenty of{107} men were in evidence when we dismounted in the courtyard. But it is only constructed of *jess* work; and the cracks which showed conspicuously in the walls of the *Mira's* reception room suggested that repairs were getting a bit overdue.

This *diwan khana* is a good-sized vaulted chamber; and its whitewashed walls were scrawled all over with rough pencil drawings of steam-boats and locomotives; as though the *Mira's* visitors had been trying to explain to him the nature of these monstrosities, neither of which can be seen within a journey of ten days. The room was empty when we entered, but the *Mira* appeared almost immediately, and seated us beside him on the dais at the end.

The High Priest of the Devil is a pronounced Anglophil, [58] a fact which will doubtless be deemed significant by our country's continental friends. He is also on terms of traditional amity with Mar Shimun, the Catholicos of the "Nestorian" Christians; for though the Christians abhor the "Devil Worshippers" most piously, both *millets* are driven into sympathy by the common oppression of the Kurds.

Ali Beg was rather a big man, as men go in the mountain districts; probably about six feet high, and about forty-five years of age. He wore a dark brown *abba* with gold embroidery round the collar; but we could make out but little of his features, as he kept his face closely muffled in the folds of his red Yezidi turban. This, however, was not to be attributed to any desire to imitate the veiled prophet of Khorassan, but only to the fact that he had a bad cold; an indisposition which had prevented his intended journey to Mosul. His manner was melancholy and depressed, as befitted the chieftain of a persecuted people; but perhaps this also, more prosaically, may be partly attributed to the cold.

He was attended by a Yezidi Sheikh, a very handsome man with a long black beard, wearing a white turban, and{108} a gown and *abba* of soft dove-coloured brown. The *Sheikhs* are the second order of the Yezidi hierarchy; the *Cawwals* or priests forming the third order, and *Pirs*, *Kuchaks*, *Fakirs* and *Mollas* being entrusted with various minor rites.

The *Mira* is virtually the Khalif of his *millet*; absolute both temporally and spiritually—a sort of combination of emperor and pope. No one dreams of questioning any order of his, or of breathing any complaint of him to the Government. The *Mira* can do no wrong. All his followers' goods are at his disposal. If he claims a woman, she is yielded to him; if he kills a man, nobody objects. Nay, the very fact of the *Mira* having killed him confers on the victim such holiness that he becomes automatically secure of immediate admission to paradise; and under such desirable conditions who has any cause to object? The office of *Mira* is hereditary, as such offices are in this country; for the idea of sanctity running in families is common both among Christians and Kurds. Mar Shimun among the former, and the Sheikhs of Barzan and Neri among the latter, may be quoted as parallel cases; and the practice has at least a respectable precedent in the house of Aaron among the Jews.[59]

Ali Beg is dead since our visit. Dead, by what (for a *Mira* of the Yezidis) may be fairly described as "natural death;" for he was just "murdered by his successor" like any old Irish king. That the succession should be allowed to go out of the family would be a thing blasphemous to hint at; but that the rightful heir should seek to accelerate his accession is only a part of the game. It is a sporting game too; for if the adventurer fails, he dies himself by torture for sacrilege the most monstrous. But if he succeeds he is *Mira*, with all the *Mira's* immunities. His predecessor is promoted to paradise, and he reigns absolute in his

room.

Wherefore, as might well be expected, the *Mira* is wont{109} to take precautions; and keeps his potential successors rather studiously at arm's length. But the heir (in this case his nephew)[60] had this time taken precautions also; and had escaped across the Russian frontier, there to watch and bide his time. In the summer which followed our visit he stole back again from his exile; and fortune favoured his enterprise, for the *Mira* fell by his hand. So now there is another *Mira*, the legitimate ruler of all the Yezidis; and no one will question his authority—until the end of his reign.

All unsuspicious of the coming tragedy we bade farewell to Ali Beg at the door of his *diwan khana*; having duly tasted of his hospitality, and assured each other of our mutual good will. One of his *Leichtach* escorted us to a point about a mile from the castle, and thence we soon gained the pathway by which we were to return to Mosul.

We finished this nefarious excursion by lodging in a Yezidi village; for the whole stage was rather too far to be accomplished in a single day. And the normal state of relations between "True Believers" and "Devil Worshippers" was disclosed to us rather instructively when we began inquiring for bread. Our host denied categorically that there was so much as a crumb in the village—until (with a good deal of trouble) we convinced him that we proposed to pay! Apparently it is quite unusual for anyone to pay anything to a Yezidi. It is a "work of supererogation" and consequently of the nature of sin. The sight of our money produced lots of things; but our sulky host was quite spoiled by it. He proceeded to take offence with us because we did not invite him to dine![61] Thus Yezidis would seem by nature to be as wicked as workhouse orphans, and no doubt a little barbarity is essential to keep them in hand.

The fruit of our three days' transgression was revealed

to us a little later, when we found that two of our followers (Moslems too, to make the crime more heinous) had been{110} obviously indulging in *raki*[62] to celebrate their return to Mosul. "It is all your fault *Effendim*" they pleaded when we began to scold them. "It was you who betrayed our innocence into the abode of *Sheitan*. And lo, this thing has befallen us. We have touched pitch and are defiled.{111}"

CHAPTER VI

THE SKIRTS OF THE MOUNTAINS (RABBAN HORMIZD, BAVIAN, AND AKRA)

ONE may go to Aleppo by train, and by carriage one may get on to Mosul; but he who would penetrate further must adopt more primitive means. Nothing that runs upon wheels can enter the Kurdistan highlands. And the "heir of all the ages," travelling there in A.D. 1900, finds himself no better off than his forerunners of B.C. 1100, whose Great King recorded amazedly on slabs of imperishable granite the fact that "I, Tiglath-Pileser, was obliged to go on foot!"

Accordingly our *Dramatis Personae* had to be radically recast at Mosul. We were escorted by two fresh *zaptiehs*; our baggage was corded on pack mules; and for our own riding we had saddle horses—or perhaps more accurately ponies, for they stood about fourteen hands high.

Our attendants deserve a paragraph to themselves; for they are representatives of a nation which we have hitherto scarcely mentioned, but of whom in the remaining chapters we shall have a great deal to tell. Aziz and Yukhanan were Syrians who had come down from their mountain villages to await our arrival at Mosul. They were about twenty-five

years of age, attired in the costume of the highlands, and imbued with true highland contempt for the dwellers in cities and plains. Outwardly there is little to distinguish them from the Kurds among whom they are domiciled; but the fact of their speaking a different language proves that they must ultimately be derived from a totally different stock; for Kurdish is akin to Persian, and is consequently an Aryan language; but Syriac is Semitic, and is the nearest{112} modern equivalent of that Aramaic which was spoken in Palestine during the lifetime of our Lord. Their own traditions aver (and in many cases their physiognomy affords strong support to the contention)[63] that they are the lineal descendants of the ancient Assyrians. Some will quite glibly assert that their family ancestor was Nebuchadnezzar; and if it be true (as the Welsh maintain) that blood feuds are a most valuable factor in ensuring the preservation of genealogies, then certainly these fellows have had every reason for keeping their pedigrees up to date.

In religion both men were Christians, and, what is more, *Shamashas* (Deacons): members of the ancient East Syrian, often called the Nestorian Church. But Syrian Deacons (though properly ordained) are not necessarily engaged exclusively in the performance of clerical duties; albeit they will always have received some sort of educational training, and (as in the present instances) will probably be able to read and write.

The regular mountain costume consists of a sort of zouave jacket, worn open over a loose shirt; and very wide trousers, girt tightly around a rather slim waist. The point of junction between these two garments is masked by a broad sash. The material of which they are composed is generally a coarse Isabella-coloured fabric, striped at rather wide intervals with a narrow red or blue line. Green is less frequently seen, because it is the colour of the false prophet, but when the grounding is purple it is sometimes

trimmed with green. The stripes are disposed vertically on the jacket and trousers, and horizontally on the sleeves; but the suit is often such a mass of patches that but little of the original survives. The head-dress is a conical felt cap,[64] which is often bound round with a turban. The front half of the head is shaved; and Tyari men wear their back hair plaited into two small pigtails, one on either side. The sash is generally garnished with a knife or pistol when the{113} men are at home in the mountains; and often, slung across the shoulder, they carry an antiquated gun.

The Kurds wear a similar costume, but a much more extensive arsenal; and the weapons with which they are furnished are usually of more modern type. This forms the main tangible distinction by which it is possible to tell a Kurd from a Syrian: but somehow a certain ruffianly swagger is the truest hall-mark of a Kurd.

The third man who had joined our party was a certain *Rabban* Werda (Friar Rose) who acted as our chief lieutenant. He too, like the others, was a deacon, but he was more usually addressed as *Rabban*; for he was one of a queer religious order which still survives in eastern Christendom, and which corresponds to one of the aspects assumed by monasticism in the west. *Rabbans*—and *Rabbantas*—(for there are a few women also in the order) —have bound themselves not to marry, not to use a razor, [65] and not to eat flesh meat. But they do not live in communities, nor obey any definite rule; and, except in the three particulars mentioned, they lead much the same life as other men. It is from the ranks of the *Rabbans* that the Syrian episcopate is recruited; for, by old tradition, *Abunas* or bishops must be celibate, though the *Qashas* or priests are always married men.

Rabban Werda in personal appearance was the image of the immortal Sancho Panza; and he wore, with his gorgeous purple trousers, a European frock-coat and a fez. But his worth is not to be gauged by his rather uninspiring

exterior. Though his views of our twentieth century may have sometimes a tinge of artlessness, in his own mediæval environment he is as intelligent and reliable a henchman as anyone need desire.

For the journey into the mountains does indeed carry us back to mediævalism; or at least to the Highlands of Scotland as they existed two hundred years ago. And the{114} sensations of Bailie Nicol Jarvie on his trip to the glens of the Lennox may be easily recaptured by a modern tourist in the Highlands of Hakkiari to-day.

We crossed the pontoon bridge at Mosul, and the broad alluvial levels which have silted up the ancient channel of the Tigris; and had soon ascended once more on to that wide rolling wold which stretches to the snow-capped mountains that lie along the horizon to the north. On our right we left the vast enclosure which marks the site of the city of Semiramis; and the mounds which cover those mighty ramparts which the old Assyrian conquerors once kept festooned with the skins of captive kings. But we have many a mile to travel before we are really clear of the site of ancient Nineveh, for the space comprised within the walls was only its inner nucleus; and without was a great Garden City of mansions and parks and orchards, analogous to the present garden city which environs the town of Van. Greater Nineveh may well have embraced the outlying palaces of Khorsabad, and the temples of Nimrud; and this would easily account for the "great city of three days' journey," (*i.e.* of about sixty miles in circumference) of which the Prophet speaks.[66]

The annihilation of this huge metropolis is one of the most astounding cataclysms in all the world's history. We possess its most intimate records almost up to the hour of its agony: and those records tell only of continual conquests, and of the building of palaces by its kings. Then falls a sudden great silence. For fifty years we hear nothing. And when fresh records take up the story, these

are written in another language, and in another character, and tell of cities and peoples which have hardly been even named before. Nineveh had vanished utterly; and within two hundred years of its fall Xenophon's army marched across the very site of it without so much as dreaming of giving its ruins a name.{115}



THE GORGE OF THE ZAB, TYARI
One of the reaches near Tal

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Other armies than Xenophon's have marched and fought over its ruins. Here, in B.C. 331, Alexander the Great encountered the great army of Darius at the little village of Gaugamela in the angle between the Tigris and the Zab. This was that great "decisive battle of the world" which was to decide the Empire of Asia, and Alexander's signal victory laid the whole of Persia at his feet. Gaugamela is about equidistant between Nineveh and Arbela, which lies about twenty miles from the battlefield on the further side of the Zab river. But all Darius' baggage and treasure were parked around Arbela; and as the pursuers poured headlong towards the place where they would find the plunder, it is Arbela and not Nineveh which has given its name to that day.

Here too in A.D. 627, upon the very site of Nineveh,

was fought the last battle in the long duel between the Sassanid Persians and the Byzantine Romans. Five years previously the Emperor Heraclius, driven within the very walls of Constantinople, had sallied from his last refuge, and had created in northern Syria the army with which he made his last throw. For five years he had marched and fought among the mountains of Armenia, striking right and left with unerring judgment and with unvarying success, at the armies which hemmed him round. At last Chosroës, brought to bay in his turn, mustered his troops for the final struggle, and met him on the site of Nineveh with an army of (it is said) 500,000 men. The Persians fought with desperation, and "it was easier to kill than to break them," but once more the skill and good fortune of the warrior-emperor triumphed; and he himself with his own hand slew Rhazates the Persian Commander,[67] in single combat between the armies before the battle was joined. The power of Chosroës was crushed: but the Romans were as much exhausted by the long-drawn struggle as the Persians; and, within a few years, both empires alike succumbed to the onslaught of the Mohammedans.[68]

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In a bird's-eye view from the mountains this country seems all one dead level, with the solitary height of Jebel Maklub rising like an island in the midst. But, to the wayfarer actually traversing it, it is a range of hills and hollows, with marshy valleys[69] intervening between sparsely cultivated downs. A few good-sized villages are passed, the largest being Tel Keif and Tel Uskof—each, as their names imply, grouped round the base of an ancient *tel*: and after a long day's journey (performed at the pace of the mules, which is rather slower than walking) we reach the township of Alkosh, placed just at the foot of the hills.

A glance at the map would suggest that it is by no means easy to determine the precise point where the plains end

and where the mountains begin. But actually there is no such uncertainty. The breastwork range of the mountains rears itself up like a wall above the minor inequalities of the plateau, and the heights stretch away right and left continuously as though they were toeing a line. Of all the countries of Europe, Spain is the land which is nearest in sympathy with the Orient; and the sudden uplift of the Cantabrian mountains above the basin of the Duero is an excellent reproduction of the rise of the Kurdistan ranges above the plain of Mosul.

Alkosh, at the foot of the steeps, is just an unmitigated sun trap; and the town seems positively sizzling under the blaze that is poured on it from the south. It is a mean little hole; but its synagogue boasts a notable shrine in the tomb of the prophet Nahum, who of course also holds local brevet rank (like Jonah) as a Mussulman saint. Commentators generally assert that the Elkosh of Nahum was in Palestine; but local tradition adheres unshakenly to the claims of the Assyrian Alkosh, and the Jews make an annual pilgrimage in order to visit this shrine. After{117} all there is much to be urged for it. Nahum was "of the children of the captivity," and he certainly knew his Nineveh better than most dwellers in Palestine can have done.

It was a weird and striking effect that we witnessed from it next morning. The clouds lay low and horizontal above the plain beneath us; and many of them seemed to have sunk on to the ground, and looked exactly like lakes under the level rays of the rising sun. As his orb rose higher they lifted, and dispersed into wreaths of vapour. How well might such an effect have inspired the words of the Prophet, "Nineveh is of old as a pool of water: yet they shall flee away!"

Some three miles east of Alkosh lies a great recess in the mountains—hardly so much a valley as a deep pocket among the cliffs. And at the end of this pocket is

ensconced one of the most interesting Christian relics in these regions—the ancient monastery of Rabban Hormizd, the Scetis of the uttermost east. Rabban Hormizd is no western monastery; it is a typical Oriental Laura: a rookery of independent hermits rather than a community of monks. And to speak of it as a "rookery" is hardly so descriptive as to call it a warren of sand-martins; for the anchorites' cells are all caves, some natural and some artificial, burrowed into the escarpments of a great natural *cirque*.

Rabban Hormizd, the original and eponymous hermit, established himself here in the eighth century; and the fame of his singular sanctity soon drew hundreds of other eremites to the neighbourhood of his lonely retreat. Here he lived praying, fasting, and macerating himself after the manner of the Great St. Anthony; and wrestling mightily with the devils who notoriously frequent such desert spots. He was evidently a believer in "close action," for the adjoining pocket is known as the Vale of Devils; and, appropriately enough, a little village of "Devil-Worshippers" is situated at the mouth of it to this day.

But perhaps in the eyes of Rabban Hormizd even the very devils themselves were not so foul an abomination as{118} the great rival monastery on Jebel Maklub,[70] which rises conspicuous in the midst of Mosul plain in full sight of his cell. For Rabban Hormizd was a "Nestorian," while the monks of Sheikh Mattai were "Jacobites;" their monastery being still the abode of their *Maphrian*, the second dignitary in their church. Both sects are equally obnoxious to the intermediate orthodox; but they are even more obnoxious to each other, for they draw towards opposite poles.

His zeal against the monks of Sheikh Mattai roused Rabban Hormizd to the great deed of his lifetime. He actually quitted his cell (for the only occasion on record) and started on a lone-hand raid against his adversaries' stronghold. The monks of Sheikh Mattai received him

hospitably, and gave him lodging in their monastery. But at dead of night he arose and groped his way to their library, where the works of "the accursed Cyril" stood stored like cordite shells. By virtue of his prayers he summoned up a miraculous spring in the centre of the floor, and carefully washed every line of writing off every page of their books! Then leaving them a collection of nice clean leaves free from every taint of heresy, he departed joyfully to his hermitage and thereafter stirred from it no more.

This scandalous transaction was of course accounted to him for righteousness; and indeed Oriental religious controversies continue to be conducted on very similar lines to this day!

The monastery of Rabban Hormizd has always been kept going ever since the date of its foundation; but now it is only the *Succursale* of the big modern monastery established on the plains below it, and there are but some four or five monks still left in the old mother house. They are Uniat Nestorians who have submitted themselves to the Papacy, and are consequently not at all in charity with the independent Nestorian church from which they have seceded. Hearing that we were going to Tyari, the home of the independent Nestorians, they inquired artlessly "Pray, do{119} you know anything of a deacon there? one Werda, a *very* wicked person—a tall man with a red beard?" (Our deacon is short and rotund, and his beard is black).

"I am *Shamasha* Werda," replied that worthy with a twinkle.

"Oh! but we don't think you can be the man we mean!" protested our hosts in some consternation.

"Oh, yes! I am," persisted the delighted deacon.[71]

Despite this *contretemps*, however, we got on with our hosts very amicably. They fed us with tea and cake, and wine from their own vineyard; and finished by conducting

us over their monastery and showing us all the sights.

The place must be a furnace in summer time, for the *cirque* faces due southward; the tawny precipices are completely destitute of vegetation, and must radiate the heat mercilessly all round that breathless pit. In the caves would lurk such coolness as was going; but the lack of water must have been a sore trial in summer. Hermits, however, are generally credited with requiring a very moderate supply.

The cells lie some way up the ramp, and are reached by a steep zigzag pathway. How many of them there may be we do not pretend to guess; but we think we may safely say hundreds; for they extend laterally for several hundred yards along the concave sweep of the corrie, and (like the port-holes of an old line-of-battle ship) they are ranged up in tier above tier. They are not of any uniform pattern, like the older hermitages at Dara; and some few (probably those which have been most recently occupied) are furnished with windows and doors. A series of narrow pathways and rude rock staircases strings the whole assortment together, and by these the solitaries were enabled to assemble at their church.

Here and there the main pathway is barred by the erection of a rude arched gateway: but the only real building is the church, which is terraced out on a buttress of rock. This church is comparatively modern, dating from about 1500;{120} but behind it, jammed against the face of the cliff, is another and much older church erected in the ninth or tenth century, and adorned with some nice bits of carving somewhat similar to the Runic work of our own land. Behind this again, excavated in the rock itself, is the veritable cell of Rabban Hormizd—a chamber some eight feet square, and approached by a sort of winding rabbit burrow. The original door and window of this cell are now closed, the church having been built up against it; and the grave of the hermit is placed in one of the walls, at a spot

which is situated immediately behind the altar.

The church of Rabban Hormizd is very much "Lord of Name," that is it enjoys great repute as a place of pilgrimage; and the virtue for which it is chiefly celebrated is the healing of the insane, or (as they are more commonly called in this country) the "possessed." The lunatic (often quite willing) is solemnly conducted to the church, and is tethered up in it for the night with a ponderous iron chain and collar affixed to a staple in the wall.[72] By morning (unless he is very mad indeed) he will usually profess himself cured. Quite a number of other mountain churches can boast a similar reputation, but their methods of treatment (as will be hereafter related) are often more drastic still.

We rejoined our caravan at the mouth of the gorge, and pursued our way steadily eastward along the foot of the mountains; passing first the village of Baadri, dominated by Ali Beg's castle, and then rejoining the road which we had followed previously on our visit to the Yezidi shrine. Some two hours beyond Ain Sufni, we reached the river Gomel, a fairly large mountain stream; and here we swung round to the left, perhaps half a mile up the river, in order{121} to get a passing glimpse of the famous "Picture Rocks" of Bavian.[73]

The Gomel emerges from the mountains by a flat-bottomed winding valley shut in on either hand by vertical walls of rock; and along the cliffs on the right bank a little above the point of exit, hangs that marvellous gallery of "pictures" so well known to Assyriologists. The principal bas-relief is a huge square panel, graven on the face of a rock bastion which immediately overhangs the stream. It comprises four gigantic figures; now wofully battered and weather-beaten, but awesome beyond all telling in the loneliness of that desolate glen. Some dozen smaller panels are ranged above it, along an upper story of the cliff; and at its foot two great detached stone tables lie half submerged

in the waters of the stream. The design of the big panel is self-repeating, each half being mirrored by the other; and this circumstance is of great assistance in deciphering the details of the work. For, some thousand years after the carvings were executed, a party of mis-begotten hermits came to settle down in the valley, and burrowed a set of cells for themselves along the face of the cliff. Two or three of these vandals chose to excavate immediately behind the great panel, and cut out their windows in the middle of it, quite regardless of the "idols" outside. With fortunate carelessness, however, they did not do their damage symmetrically, and the portions destroyed upon one side remain on the other intact. The subject is King Sennacherib making an offering to the goddess Ishtar; and the inscription records the destruction of Babylon, which had rebelled against him at the commencement of his reign, and which he took and razed to the ground.

The panels on the cliff above are all identical with each other. They have semi-circular heads, and are carved with the figure of the king. Of the two great slabs in the water, one bears on its face three figures—apparently the god Bel and two worshippers—and is carved on one of the {122} angles into a small human-headed bull. The second is so much eroded that it is impossible to distinguish the design.

It seems that the cliffs of the Gomel were one of the principal quarries which supplied the materials for constructing the ancient palaces of Nineveh. Most of the great slabs were quarried from the upper beds of the limestone, and were brought down to the river bank, at the foot of the principal bas-relief, by a broad inclined way which can still be distinctly traced. Down this they could be lowered on rollers, and would then be safely deposited upon the spit of sand and shingle piled up under the bank by the river; for this work would be done in summer, at a time when the waters were low. The gravel beneath the slab would then be dug away in sections; and, bit by bit,

there would be inserted under it a wicker-framed raft or *keleg* supported on inflated skins. Given a sufficiency of skins such a raft can be made to float anything, and in autumn, when the river rose again, the slab would be floated down to the Tigris, and landed under the walls of Nineveh near the palace for which it was destined. The two slabs now lying in the water were evidently intended to be transported in this manner, but for some cause (which we can now only guess at) they were eventually abandoned unshipped. Possibly they were mis-handled and damaged. Possibly the building of the palace was interrupted by the assassination of Sennacherib, and was never resumed subsequently when Esarhaddon had quelled Sharezer's revolt.

It is conceivable that the great panel also would eventually have been cut from the rock behind it, lowered on to the spit beneath, and dispatched in similar fashion; but it is perhaps more likely that this was always intended to remain as a permanent monument in its present site. The smaller panels along the crest of the cliff do not look as if they had been destined for removal. They were probably carved for mere "swank," to give dignity to the royal quarries; or to keep the carvers' hands in, at a time when contract work was slack.

The handling and moving of the ponderous blocks habitually employed by the ancients would tax even modern{123} constructors, with all the resources of machinery and steam power which nowadays they have at command. But the Assyrians (like the Romans after them) could avail themselves of a limitless amount of dirt-cheap labour. The hordes of captives taken in their wars had to be used somehow; and no one raised any objection if they were rather rapidly used up. Men cost less than oxen or asses, and their strength could be applied more effectively. They could be drilled to keep step, and to give their tugs in unison. Moreover the old Oriental task-masters possessed

an asset which we have lost—a supreme scorn for being unduly hurried. They could well afford to spend a generation or so on buildings which were designed to endure for centuries, and which might have endured for millennia if only they had been left alone.

But even their works of utility have been no more spared by posterity than the tablets which recorded their learning, or the palaces which were the trophies of their pride. And such a work also had its source at the quarries in the Gomel valley; one of those splendid irrigating channels which used to feed the desert with the waters of life.[74] Its course can be traced for some distance alongside the banks of the river; where for yards upon yards the ample conduit is hewn through spurs of solid rock. Werda had seen further remains of it far away on the plains to the southward; "and the villagers were carrying off the stone facing of the embankments to use in building their huts." It was "only the work of infidels," and consequently fair loot for anyone. Now European engineers are labouring to re-establish what might have been so easily preserved.

The "Pictures of Bavian" are at least exempt from the fate which has befallen most pictures. They are fixed for ever immovably in the position for which they were designed. They are like some forgotten "Old Master" which still hangs tarnished and ill-lit above the altar where it was dedicated; and which shows there far more nobly than{124} when restored and exhibited in a brand-new gilded frame on a glaring gallery wall. There are far finer Assyrian sculptures in the Louvre and the British Museum than the grim, gaunt, battered sentinels that keep watch over the Gomel vale. But ranged along a Bloomsbury corridor they are obviously mere graven images; while enthroned amid the solitudes of their own eerie mountains they seem to be the very gods themselves.

There are several similar bas-reliefs scattered here and there about the mountains—some fairly well preserved like

those at Malthaiyah between Dohuk and Alkosh, some now almost obliterated like that by the gate of Amadia. The great king seems to have delighted in setting his seal upon any conspicuous point that was reached by his conquering armies: and to this day that instinct re-asserts itself in the behaviour of Private Atkins, who delights to carve the badge of his regiment upon any conspicuous precipice in Afghanistan.

A caravan moves but slowly, but it generally wants to keep moving, and the novice who is travelling with it finds that he is allowed few lengthy halts. The old stagers always seem thinking of some point a little way ahead which they would much prefer to have behind them. Sometimes it is a bad bit of road which can only be traversed in broad daylight; sometimes a river which may suddenly be rendered unfordable by the intervention of an unforeseen spate. On this stage the unknown factor was the conduct of the Khozr river, a much more considerable stream than the Gomel, which lay some four hours further east; and whose behaviour on the present occasion was more problematical than usual because the dark clouds to the northward might imply heavy rain in the hills.

"Rabbi Mr. Wigram" had lively recollections of his last experiences with the Khozr. He had been kept for three days on the banks of it, waiting for the floods to subside. And he had forded it at last "in his birthday suit," with the water over his horse's withers, and his clothes slung over his shoulders to keep them out of the wet. We are wont to deride the rustic who *expectat dum defluat amnis*;{125} but our derision only shows our own ignorance as much as his expectancy showed his. The rustic was quite well acquainted with the behaviour of his own mountain rivers, and knew that when they were in spate there was simply nothing else to be done.

And our chances of passing the Khozr were rendered additionally dubious by the fact that none of our party

knew the right road to take for the fords. The *zaptiehs* had never been in this district and could offer us no assistance. The *Rabbi Effendi* had approached the river from a different direction, and that some years before. We caught a guide in one of the villages; but as his first step was to ask the way himself at the very next village that we came to, we grew distrustful of his capacity and dismissed him again to his home. Few of the inhabitants ever stray beyond the bounds of their own village, and on a more extended excursion they are often hopelessly at sea.

Thus thrown on our own resources we took a bee-line across the moorland, steering our course by the light of nature and by a very small scale map. And fortune so far favoured us that we found the river in its very mildest mood; and though we had struck it at none of the recognized fording-places, there was no difficulty in getting across.

But safe on the further bank our perplexities recommenced again. The dusk was falling rapidly, and we needed a lodging for the night. By now we should have been at Khalilka, a prosperous and desirable village, which is part of the private estate of the ex-Sultan Abdul Hamid, and which on that account enjoys immunity from taxes and conscription and raids.[75] But of course in missing the fords we had also missed Khalilka, and not knowing whether it were above or below us, were uncertain which way to turn. However, it was tolerably obvious that if we followed the river either way we should presently find a village of some sort; and a little distance down the left bank we alighted{126} upon a straggling hamlet of miserable Kurdish hovels, which we unanimously accepted as being "Hobson's choice."

Of course no *khan* is to be looked for in any of these outlying villages, and it is customary for the traveller to quarter himself upon the *rais* or head man. He will obtain fire and shelter, and liberty to eat his own provisions, and

possibly (if he is fortunate) will be able to purchase bread. Such entertainment should be requited, if mine host is poor, in money; if he is a person of importance, by some kind of trifling gift. Hospitality is hardly ever refused even to the humblest wayfarer, and public opinion quite backs a man who enforces it if it is denied.

In the present case the only shelter available was the veranda of the *rais'* house; which afforded us a roof certainly, but no outer wall—only a wattle hurdle about five feet high. Here, however, we kindled a fire, and packed ourselves in pretty comfortably; though the night was made constantly hideous by the howling of the village dogs. Their uproar was not unjustified, for (as we were informed next morning) a scavenging pack of "you-eë-yahs" had been prowling round the hamlet all night. A "you-eë-yah" is a sort of hyæna which haunts the neighbourhood of villages, and gives intimation of its presence by incessantly howling out its own name. It is known alternatively as a *Ghul* or *Sheitan* because it is addicted to digging up and devouring the corpses buried in the graveyards; a foul and stealthy brute, but not dangerous to man. We had heard the howls all night intermittently between the volleys of barking, but had thought it was only the village cats taking their share in the row.

Next day the road was easier to follow; not because it was marked more clearly, but because its direction was defined by a string of Mohammedan cemeteries which were dotted across the moorland at intervals of three or four miles. These are small square walled enclosures, generally with a *santon's* tomb in the middle, and with tall slender Moslem head-stones marking some of the principal graves. The country was open and undulating, but everywhere barren and pebbly; one can hardly as yet call it stony, as{127} that more emphatic word will be urgently needed later on. Here and there were traces of villages; but these were all abandoned and ruined, with nothing left but

foundations, or a fragment or two of broken wall. The only inhabited villages stood high on the hills overlooking us, generally with an Agha's castle planted somewhat aggressively in the midst.

There is something unnatural in this desertion, for the land might obviously be cultivated, and within the walls of the cemeteries there stand many well-grown trees.[76] But the key to the flight of the inhabitants is not the parsimony of nature:

Rookhope stands in a pleasant place
If the false thieves wad let it be.

And this essential condition is very conspicuously lacking in the country between Bavian and Akra, not to mention several districts further north; for across this ground twice a year pass that horde of human locusts, the wandering Heriki tribesmen; and one skinning every six months is more than any village can survive.

The Heriki are a large tribe of Kurdish nomads who possess no permanent domicile. They encamp in winter on the plain of Mosul, and in summer on the loftier and cooler plateau of Urmi; and with all their flocks and herds and their other possessions, they migrate every spring from Mosul to Urmi, and every autumn from Urmi to Mosul. It is not a good thing for a village to lie in the track of the Heriki, for everything that is not too hot or too heavy they annex and carry away. They "lift" the sheep and cattle first; then the rugs and kettles and pitchers and the scanty household plenishing; and they leave their hapless entertainers with nothing but bare walls and rags.

We had learned something of their thoroughness at our last night's lodgings on the Khozr; for in the veranda of the *rais'* house we had found three or four large bales, securely corded up in pieces of carpet, and had casually{128} asked what they were. Our poor host replied despondently that he was "warehousing" them for the Heriki. They would call upon him and claim them when next they passed that way. No; they paid him nothing for "warehousing," but he had to be responsible for them; and he had to restore four-fold if any of the contents were lost.

"And what is in them?" we asked. The poor wretch grew even more dejected. "Oh, it is all my own property; my own rugs and cooking pots," he replied. "That is to say part of it mine, and part the property of the other villagers,

which the Heriki took from us when they plundered the village last time!"

So complete was the reign of terror which the impudent scoundrels had established, and so powerless was the Government to keep their depredations in check, that they could actually dragoon their victims into keeping their own plunder till they called for it, and go off for six months quite confident that their orders would be implicitly obeyed!

Our day's stage ended at Akra; a considerable mountain township and the seat of a Turkish *kaimakam*, a departmental governor, subordinate in the present instance to the *Vali* of the province of Mosul. Akra displays itself most imposingly to a traveller approaching from the westward, and indeed forms a striking spectacle from whatever point it is viewed. Behind it a group of steep-pitched ridges are gabled out from the main mountain chain like a range of gigantic dormers, and drop down in rugged hipped ends to the level plain far below. Their crests are hacked and indented like the "dissipated saw" of the Bab Ballads, and the intervening gorges are half choked with the avalanches of boulders which have cascaded down their flanks. The lower portions of these gorges are filled with trees which grow in the terraced garden plots alongside the little rivulets, but the upper slopes are all bare and tawny like broken craters of half-baked clinker brick.



ORAMAR.

Looking northward across the gorge towards the crags of Supa Durig between Jilu and Baz.

No. 6

One of the most prominent of these ridges breaks down into a sort of saddle, and surges up again into a rocky knoll before its final descent to the plain; and across this saddle are hung the houses of Akra, with the ruined fragments of{129} its ancient citadel crowning the highest point of the rocky ridge above. The bulk of the town overflows into the ravine on the western side, where the houses are ranged round the sweep of the hollow like the stepped seats of an amphitheatre. So steep are the slopes on which they lie that the roof of each house serves as a front yard to its next door neighbour, or perhaps one should say to its neighbour on the next story; and the streets are all so narrow that they are quite undiscernible from a distance, though one of them is in fact wide enough to accommodate a rudimentary bazaar.

Akra does not boast a *khan*, but our *zaptiehs* had already decided for us at what house we were to spend the evening. We were to put up with the *malmudir*, the departmental treasurer;[77] and one of our escort had already spurred ahead to inform that worthy functionary of the treat that was in store for him. This seemed rather an arbitrary proceeding, but the *malmudir* quite acquiesced in it. We

met him at the entrance to the town, walking out to make us welcome; a young and pleasant looking man, who greeted us in French very hospitably, and guided us up the steep stepped streets to his house on the saddle above.

None of the houses in Akra can be called in any way palatial, and probably the *malmudir's* lodging was a typical residence of the better class. He occupied a single apartment on the first floor, the big landing outside serving as his kitchen and servant's room, and the ground floor consisting only of an entrance hall and lumber room. The furniture of his living room (as usual) consisted only of carpets and cushions. The windows were set very low down, so that one could see out of them comfortably when squatting on the floor; and above them were square recesses which served as receptacles for books.

He gave us a capital supper, consisting of fried eggs,{130} rissoles wrapped in cabbage, and a curry of meat and fruit. This was served in several dishes on one large tray, round which we all sat cross-legged straying from dish to dish with our wooden spoons. We had only one tumbler between the three of us, which we all used in turn; and the meal was concluded with the usual tiny cups of coffee.[78]

Meanwhile he poured out his woes to us: woes with which we could heartily sympathize, and which afforded an instructive commentary upon the progress of Turkish "Reform." He himself was a native of Aleppo, a Syrian Catholic Christian. He had been duly trained for his post in the Government offices at Constantinople; and had received his present appointment in pursuance of that great Principle which was first enunciated at the Revolution, recognizing that Christians and Moslems should possess equal standing in the State. This admirable theory worked fairly in Constantinople itself, and even at the more accessible provincial capitals such as Smyrna and Aleppo; but alas for its practical efficacy in such out-of-the-way districts as Mosul! It would take at least a generation for

reform to filter through here! Here all the administrative offices had been long since cornered by the invincibly corrupt "Old Gang;" a set of pig-headed reactionaries whose dead weight nothing could shift. What use was it to tell them that Christians and Moslems were equal, when the Koran expressly stated that they were emphatically not? Why should they use the powers that were their inalienable birthright to make true believers obey a Christian dog?

Accordingly the poor *malmudir* found himself cold-shouldered and thwarted at every turn by the officials who were nominally his colleagues; by the *cadi*, or judge of the district; by the *binbashi* who controlled the police. They persistently refused to support him in carrying out his own duties, particularly if the defaulters whom he wished to bring to book chanced to be their own private friends; and{131} their continual snubbing of him had infected even his own subordinates who obeyed him grudgingly and reluctantly. The *kaimakam*, his immediate chief, had indeed always shown himself friendly; but even with his support he felt he could make no headway; and, though still but new to his office, he was already sick of the job. Indeed he had already written twice to the *Vali* begging to be transferred to Beirut or Aleppo, but as yet he had received no answer. This however, we privately thought, was not surprising; for Tahir Pasha never answers anybody; and every official in his *vilayet* would like to be transferred to Beirut or Aleppo if he could!

Of course it is not at all improbable that centuries of subjection have left the Christians in Turkey constitutionally unfit for positions of authority: that, for all their superior intelligence, they are at present as incapable of governing Turks and Kurds and Arabs as the Bengali Babus are of governing Pathans and Sikhs. But even if the power is latent in them, it is bound at first to be exercised in the face of intense resentment; and this fact will long

constitute a formidable obstacle to any constitutional reform.

It seemed that the *malmudir's* welcome to us was to some extent accounted for by the distinction which European visitors would confer upon him in the eyes of his carping colleagues. He was earnest with us to remain as his guests for a second day in order that he might exhibit us; but from this we begged to excuse ourselves as we could not spare the time. However, *faute de mieux*, we might at least call on the *kaimakam*, and thither our host conducted us as soon as we had finished our coffee.

The *kaimakam* resided in the Government House, a dilapidated two-story building disposed around a forlorn courtyard and generally resembling a *khan*. It was picturesque enough in a slummy way, and the groups of soldiers snoozing under the lanterns in the deep entrance archway would merit yet higher commendation. But there was little enough of traditional "Oriental glamour" about the dirty white-washed walls; and the governor's official audience hall resembled an ill-kept village school-room. {132} Conversation turned on the Italian war; a subject on which all parties were profoundly ignorant; for we had heard nothing since leaving Europe, and the *kaimakam* nothing but what Government channels allowed to filter through. The Government does not encourage the dissemination of inauspicious news; and herein no doubt they act prudently, for such news might easily excite the Kurds to break out in reprisals against the nearest Christians. But it is certainly somewhat amazing to discover how thoroughly authentic intelligence can be stifled. They had heard of nothing but Turkish victories: have very likely heard nothing else to this day.[79]

Two or three of the prominent residents dropped in to chat while we were sitting there; but the resident whom we would most have wished to see was unfortunately not among them. For among the inhabitants of Akra is an old

gentleman of the bluest blood in Asia—the last living descendant of the Khalif Harun al Raschid the hero of the Arabian Nights. Akra formed a part of the Abbassides' ancestral principality before they attained to the Khalifate; and when their dynasty was overthrown by the Seljuk Sultans in 1050, it was to their ancient patrimony that they retired again. Now even this last possession has also slipped through their fingers; and the poor old survivor, though his social status is impregnable, lives on, as a private citizen of Akra, in very reduced circumstances indeed.

Our final impressions of Akra were gleaned in the bazaar, and induce us to rank it more highly as a centre of sport than of business. "Rabbi Mr. Wigram" had needed some trifling repair to his boots, and had accordingly sent them overnight to a cobbler. But when the boots were returned next morning, the part that needed repair had been ignored completely, and the repairer had only displayed his forethought by appropriating the English nails.

Akra, however, in this respect had certainly shown more{133} enterprize than Mosul; for the *Sheikh Birader Effendi* had previously tried his fortune there. He had the prescience to allow three days for the job; but when the boots were demanded on the morning of the fourth day they had not even lost their nails. Friday (it was explained) had been the Mohammedan Sabbath, and Saturday the Jewish, and Sunday the Christian; and no doubt a Bank Holiday on Monday was only averted by the fact of the boots being prematurely reclaimed.[80]

The second incident at Akra was of a still more farcical character. A Kurd had come in from the mountains in order to purchase a mule, and after a good deal of chaffering had traded off a pistol in exchange. The seller had promptly proceeded to test the purchase money by the rather drastic method of firing a bullet through his leg; and, on the accident being reported to us, we had deemed it our

duty to go and volunteer "first aid." The patient, however, was quite content with his own remedies, and not at all anxious to experiment in new-fangled treatment *a la Franga*. He was plugging the hole himself with a mixture of butter and cow dung which he was poking in with a stick! Probably this dressing possesses some kind of antiseptic qualities; for it is much favoured in the mountains, and somehow does not seem to prevent the wounds healing. But perhaps the cure results not by virtue, but in spite, of the remedy, for with these tough-fibred mountaineers "first intention" will hardly be denied.{134}

CHAPTER VII

AN ORIENTAL VICH IAN VOHR

(THE SHEIKH OF BARZAN)

"IT is real rough travelling in the mountains," says the Mosul resident casually; and the traveller just arrived from Europe hears that innocent observation with dismay. He has undergone a fortnight of *arabas* and *khans* and *chóls* and *zaptiehs*, and lo! that purgatorial experience is dismissed as a holiday jaunt. It is therefore with some misgiving that he enters those formidable mountains where he has been promised enlightenment as to what "real rough travelling" means.

Let it be recorded for his consolation that he will learn the worst at the outset. If he is not daunted at Akra he may quite fairly count on winning through. The ascent from that town to the top of the pass behind it is as nasty a bit of climbing as any in all Hakkiari, and he who achieves it with credit may pass as a graduated mountaineer. The path is not so nerve-shaking in appearance as some of the dizzy goat-tracks that have to be encountered beyond it; but it is

an epitome of every trial which can be ordinarily presented in concrete form. It is steep and rugged and rotten. It traverses slabs of sloping rock, and sheets of slippery scree. Its surface is pitted like honeycomb with holes about twelve inches deep and six or eight inches in diameter; and if any better traps could be devised for tripping unwary pedestrians, or breaking the legs of horses, no doubt they would be provided to make the entanglement complete. Our *katarjis* admit that it is bad, but regard the badness as incorrigible. "Her nainsell didna mak ta road" (a fact that is quite self-evident), and "if shentlemans{135} are seeking ta Red Gregarach" what better going can they expect?

From the summit of the pass (full three thousand feet above the plain) we descend into a fertile valley, well watered by a mountain rivulet, and feathery with lofty pampas reed; and an equal ascent on the further side brings us to the top of a second range of mountains, from which we can take our first survey of the wild land whither we are bound.

Beneath us lies the Zab valley, a chaos of hummocks and hollows all flung together confusedly like the waves of a choppy sea; and the broad bright ribbon of the river, almost equal in volume to the Tigris, picks out a devious passage through a maze of interlacing bluffs. The opposite side of the chasm is defined by a bold escarpment, scarred by the tracks of winter torrents and buttressed by jagged limestone fins. And above this, along the horizon, tower the great snow peaks of the Hakkiari Oberland—the *rigidus Niphates* of Horace; the spot where (according to Milton) Satan first planted his feet when he alighted on the new-made world.

An iron-bound untamable fastness—a regular Brigands' Paradise—it is known as the Ashiret country, that is to say, "the Country of the Clans." And the inhabitants (to do them justice) are quite ready to exploit its capabilities. Though nominally Turkish subjects they are actually semi-

independent; half borderers of the type of Johnny Armstrong, half highlanders of the type of Rob Roy. Here the Sultan's decrees are worth little without a visible backing of bayonets; and every individual filibuster does that which is right—or more accurately that which is expedient—in his own eyes. Such authority as exists anywhere is for the most part in the hands of the tribal chieftains: and the suzerainty of the Stamboul Government is just about as effective as the suzerainty of the old kings of Scotland on the north side of Stirling Bridge.

There are three degrees of security for a traveller in Asiatic Turkey. There are districts where he is safe: there are districts where a *zaptieh* can keep him safe: and there{136} are districts where a *zaptieh* can't. Our knights-errant brought us down loyally to the village of Biri Kupra, a ramshackle Kurdish hamlet which stands at the foot of the pass. They escorted us on the next morning as far as the banks of the river—but when we reached the ferry their responsibility came to an end. Across they could not follow us. It was the Sheikh of Barzan's country. And the *Hukumet* felt some delicacy about parading their officials in his domain. No doubt he would receive them graciously —under favour and without prejudice; but there was no earthly use in pretending that *zaptiehs* could protect us there.

It is rather an adventure for a native to travel in the Ashiret country. Supposing that he is at all worth robbing, he should sound his way carefully as he goes. But Europeans enjoy more security. The tribesmen have made the discovery that if a European is molested there is almost inevitably a row. His ambassador prods up the *Hukumet*, and the *Hukumet* sends an expedition; and "a mort o' troops" march through the country, and live at free quarters in the villages, and imprison a number of people who are probably not at all to blame. Thus, though the original aggressor is generally the last person to be directly

incommoded, he incurs quite a lot of unpopularity for "breeding such a function" in the land. Even the most reckless marauder will think twice before pulling his trigger upon a convoy that is travelling under the protection of a European hat: and thus the wearer of the hat aforesaid finds that every native who is travelling in his direction will tack himself on to his party and "walk under his shadow" as far as their ways coincide.

We ourselves in the present instance had no cause for any disquietude; for the Sheikh of Barzan is not only one of the most powerful but one of the most respectable of the mountain chieftains, and is pleased to regard all Englishmen as his particular friends.

The Zab, at the point where we struck it, is a broad, deep, rapid, river; and fording is out of the question either for man or beast. The Sheikh usually maintains a horse{137} ferry, of the type we used on the Euphrates; but this was temporally *hors de combat*, being reported to have sprung a leak. We found it beached on the further shore, and it certainly seemed to us that a little human ingenuity and two or three gallons of tar were all that it needed to make it seaworthy; but all parties seemed quite content to put up for a time with the *keleg*—a little wattle hurdle buoyed up on four inflated skins.

The *keleg* could only carry two passengers at a time, or alternatively a very small cargo; and the beasts had all to be unloaded, and induced (most reluctantly) to swim. Thus it took a long time to transport us; but presently we were all loaded up again and proceeded about an hour's march up a little lateral valley, till we reached the village of Barzan at the foot of the great flanking hill.

Barzan is rather larger than an average Kurdish village, but boasts no distinguishing feature to suggest its importance in the land. Most of even the less powerful chiefs are housed in defensible "castles"; but the Sheikh of Barzan "dwells among his own people," and his palace is

just an agglomeration of several ordinary houses joined in one. It possesses no outer door at all (or none that we have ever discovered), and we entered it by the simple process of stepping on to the roof, and walking across to the summer reception room, a rude *belvedere* on the farther side. The Sheikh, it appeared, was absent. He had gone on a visit to Amadia, and was expected back the day after to-morrow; but as we were journeying westward we should certainly meet him next day. Meanwhile we were made warmly welcome by his old major-domo the Imaum[81] (an old friend of some of our party), by his young mollah or domestic chaplain, and by several truculent-looking *duinhewassels* who formed part of his regular following.

We could not, of course, be allowed to pass by the house without eating; but we specially begged of our hosts that (as we were anxious to push forward) they would only give{138} us such food as they could quickly and easily prepare. And we hold it a genuine proof of their friendliness that they actually did as we asked them, bringing eggs, bread, honey, and tea. A big man, who wishes to do you honour formally, would consent to no such curtailment. He would probably keep you waiting for hours while he killed and dressed a sheep.

When we arose to depart the imaum and mollah went with us to a certain tree beyond the village in order to "pour us on our road." All important houses in these parts have some recognized point on the approach to them, whither the owner proceeds to welcome and dismiss his guests. It is recorded that on one occasion only (in order to meet the British Consul) the Sheikh rode out in person as far as this statutory tree.

Our hosts had provided us with an armed escort—a "Boy of the Belt" in a red turban, indicating that he belonged to the Sheikh's personal body-guard. And under his guidance we proceeded for a day and a half up the valley, a journey somewhat comparable to the progress of

a beetle across the ridges and furrows of a ploughed field. The hills are too stony for cultivation; but here and there a fan of good soil has spread itself out from the mouth of one of the gullies, and has been terraced into grain plots by the inhabitants of the village hard by. These villages (judged by local standards) may be called fairly prosperous-looking, for the Sheikh is a merciful over-lord: but the "roads" are consistently villainous; the "Far Cry" was an asset at Lochow!

In our eyes the first of these symptoms is the one to determine our sympathies. We can forgive much in this country to a chieftain who does (as a rule) honestly exert himself to keep order; who has realized that it pays him better to protect his vassals than to oppress them; and who can be trusted to administer some sort of "Jeddart Justice" in fairly equable fashion to Kurd and Christian alike. But by Turkish officials generally we fear he is less appreciated. The Old Turks hate him with an A because he is Able, and the Young because he is Autocratic: and we cannot pretend{139} to deny that he is sometimes "a bit of a handful," and that his methods of administration are rather ingenuously Draconian.

As recently as in 1909 he was at open war with the Government, and in this particular quarrel he was not very greatly to blame. The chief sinners were Sabonji Pasha and some of the corrupt gang who were running the administration at Mosul. They coveted some of the Sheikh's villages, and the Sheikh refused to part.[82] Accordingly they trumped up a charge that he was conspiring against the *Hukumet*; a charge which could readily be made plausible, for there is not a chief in the province but lets his tongue loose against the Government at times. The true test of serious disaffection, however, is the courting of Russian assistance; and the prominent Russophiles hereabouts are the Sheikh's particular *bêtes noirs*.

At any rate the charge won credence. The Sheikh's friends were arrested and imprisoned. An army was marched into his territory; his villages were seized and occupied, and his wives carried off to Mosul. The Sheikh himself for some months was a homeless fugitive in the mountains; and it was then that he reaped the fruit of his good treatment of his villagers, for not a man, Christian or Moslem, ever dreamt of betraying him to his foes. Then, too, we first made his acquaintance, disguised in mean raiment and attended by a single follower, lurking in some of the Christian villages just beyond the limits of his domain.

But the scoring was not all on one side. Vich Ian Vohr boasted that the race of Ivor would seldom take the field with fewer than five hundred claymores; and the Sheikh of Barzan can muster certainly five thousand, and possibly twice that force. These levies were no more discommoded by the destruction of their "base of operations" than a swarm of the local red hornets whose nest has been demolished by a stone. Three of the seven regiments mobilized against them were captured *en bloc* among the crags,{140} with arms, ammunition, and artillery; and no commensurate losses were ever inflicted on the mountaineers.[83] Mosul was denuded of troops in order to maintain the struggle and the inhabitants were in a frenzy of terror lest the ubiquitous highlanders should swoop on the defenceless town. But that the Sheikh shrank from a step which would be bound to make the breach irreparable, it is indeed highly probable that these would have proved no empty fears. He is said to have declared roundly that if matters went much farther he intended to capture the place and make it over to the British Vice-Consul! That gentleman was by no means desirous of receiving so inconvenient a gift!

A peace was concluded at last; and the Sheikh was pleased to attribute it very largely to the friendly offices of

the British; though really the principal factor was the intervention of a level-headed *Vali* at Mosul.[84] We did little more than insist that the Sheikh's wives ought to be set at liberty and treated with fitting distinction; and that, when the "conspiracy" of which he was accused had been officially admitted to be non-existent, there was no longer any valid reason for keeping the "conspirators" in jail. But the Sheikh is "easy with them that have shown themselves easy with him," and those who take the trouble to "'gree wi' Rob" are usually gainers on the deal.

We traversed one of the battlefields in the course of our journey westward: a crater-like hollow in the wilderness, environed by steep stony hills. Here one of the Government regiments encountered the Sheikh and his army; for the{141} Sheikh was present in person, though he left the actual conduct of operations to a certain Abd-'l-Kadr who acted as his "chief of the host." It was the first regular pitched battle, and the tribesmen were somewhat awed at the prospect of engaging the *Hukumet*; for which cause, in order to inspirit them, the Sheikh himself fired the first shot. In Kurdistan the firing of a gun constitutes an appeal for assistance; and the Sheikh, with fine dramatic instinct, fired his gun straight towards heaven, appealing to Allah Himself. The event of the day—the capture of the entire regiment, with three pieces of mountain artillery—was thus a prodigious enhancement of his Holiness's[85] personal prestige. Not only had he scored a valuable point in his secular and temporal capacity, but he was held to have signally vindicated his spiritual pre-eminence as well.

The Sheikh, in the eyes of his followers, is not merely a great tribal chieftain. They believe in his hereditary sanctity: and his clansmen are also his devotees. This fact is strikingly exemplified by an incident which had occurred a little earlier, and which was related to us by Mar Shimun, the Patriarch of the Assyrian Christians, who himself inspires equal veneration among his own adherents.[86] A

column in pursuit of the Sheikh caught a small boy who had dropped behind the party, and demanded of him with menaces which way the fugitives had gone. But the child was as staunch as steel. “By the Holy Name of the Sheikh I will not tell!” he answered. And that was all they could get out of him either by coaxing or threats. The Turkish Captain was fortunately a kind-hearted fellow, and did not ill-use his small captive; but he did not omit, in releasing him, to draw a moral from his pluck. “We shall not make much of this war,” he observed, with a smile to his officers. “You can judge from this example with what sort of folk we have to deal. This child is in my power utterly. None would call me to account if I killed him. And yet, knowing this, he defies me; and swears by his Sheikh as by a god!{142}”

It was on the evening of the second day after we had quitted Barzan that we drew near to the hamlet of Suryi, planted in the re-entering angle formed by the confluence of the Oramar river with the Zab. It is a mean little place, consisting of some twenty cabins which spill themselves down the face of a steep brae a little way back from the river; and at the top of the bank stands the castle of the village Agha—a rudely built fortified residence like a second-rate border peel tower. It was here that we looked to meet the Sheikh, for it is a recognized halting-point between Amadia and Barzan; and, crossing the Oramar river, we bent our way towards the tower.

It was about five o’clock in the evening that we reached the first house in the village, and the crowd of men and horses which was grouped around the castle was a proof that the Sheikh, “with his tail on,” had already arrived from Amadia. News of our approach had preceded us; and we were met by an embassage from his Holiness bearing an invitation (or should we say “command” under the circumstances?) to partake of his hospitality for the night. We dismounted at the castle door amid a throng of wild

retainers, and at the top of the rude stone staircase we were greeted by the Sheikh in person; who led us into the "*belai*"[87] (or *belvedere*), which served him as his temporary audience hall, and motioned us to seats on a mattress spread immediately opposite his own.

It was a prodigious condescension from so great a man that he should have come to the stair head to meet us. Most great chiefs will contrive to be absent from the room when European guests are admitted, that they may not have to rise to receive them, and so seem to admit inferiority. But presently the Sheikh vouchsafed us a still greater honour—one that perfectly staggered his followers—by even condescending to sup with us. To think that a man of his holiness should actually eat with two *giaours*!

Abdul Selim, Sheikh of Barzan, is quite a young man of{143} about twenty-eight years of age. Like most mountaineers he is of medium height, with a slight and active figure and a grave but pleasant face. He was dressed in a white fez and turban, white shirt and trousers, a black gown trimmed with red, and a green cloak over all. His retinue consisted of between thirty and forty retainers —"Boys of the Belt," distinguished by their red turbans, and positively festooned with bandoliers. Many of these fellows must have been carrying quite two hundred rounds of ball cartridge, and their rifles—Sniders and Martinis—were piled around the walls of the *belai*. All showed most obsequious deference towards their young chieftain; and it may give some adequate conception of the reverence which they entertain for him to record the fact that he himself, in his own proper person, is a *ziaret* or place of pilgrimage "within the meaning of the Act." By his own immediate followers his commands are obeyed instantly and without question; and we have not the least doubt that had he ordered us to be shot, instead of entertaining us graciously, the sentence would have been executed unhesitatingly, Europeans though we were.

An instructive example of their diligence occurred shortly after our visit. A long-standing feud between the Christians of Tkhuma and some of their Kurdish neighbours had recently blazed into activity; and the latter, rather unsportingly, were endeavouring to persuade their co-religionists to join them in a *jehad* or "holy war." A *jehad* is an ugly business: and we were much relieved when the Sheikh of Barzan interfered strongly to quash it; refusing himself to sanction it, and prohibiting his vassals from joining in. He was moved to this action, we verily believe, partly by a wish to oblige us, and partly by his own prejudices in favour of law and order; for he had no particular cause to show favour to the Tkhuma *maliks*, since they had refused to shelter him when he was a fugitive in the war.

Deprived of the Sheikh's countenance the *jehad* proved a rather damp squib. But for a moment it seemed just possible that some of his vassals would break out in spite of him. And scenting insubordination in a certain Tettu Agha, who{144} was about the biggest recalcitrant, the Sheikh dispatched one of his henchmen in order to emphasize his commands. The envoy entered the Agha's castle and was duly received in audience. He delivered his chieftain's message, but the Agha proved sullen and obstinate. He reiterated his remonstrances, but the Agha refused to give way.

"The Sheikh's word must not be broken," concluded the plenipotentiary. "The Sheikh has sent me to you to tell you to stop at home."

"And what do I care if he has?" retorted the Agha mutinously. "Let the Sheikh send his orders to others. I don't intend to obey."

The Sheikh's man sprang to his feet, and flung himself upon the rebel. A minute later he burst from the room, brandishing a dripping dagger, and leaving Tettu Agha dead on his own dais.

"The Sheikh's word shall not be broken," he proclaimed.

This incident was generally regarded as going a little far perhaps; but no one thought of protesting. The lamented Tettu had never been exactly popular; and what else could he expect, anyway, if he "wadna do what M'Callum More bade"?



THE HERIKI VALLEY.

The mountain at the head of the valley is a shoulder of Sat Dagh. The terrace fields of a mountain village appear in the lower corner.

No. 7

The very rooms in which we were sitting, sipping tea and smoking cigarettes with his Holiness, had been the scene of what Major Dugald Dalgetty would call "a very pretty little *camisado*" during the progress of the late campaign. The castle, as a frontier post, was a position of some importance; and it was a shrewd loss to the Sheikh when the Agha whom he had placed in charge of it betrayed his trust to his foes. The Agha was fully aware that his *seigneur* might feel sore about it. He kept the place

strongly garrisoned, and posted around it a double line of sentries and watch-dogs. The approaches on two sides are barred by the rivers, unfordable and icy cold in winter; and on the third side rise precipitous mountains, barely climbable even by day. But one night in a winter blizzard, when the very dogs had crept away to seek shelter, the Sheikh's men seized their opportunity and wormed their way up to the fort. The howling of the tempest drowned the noise of their{145} picks as they cautiously loosened stone after stone from the walling; and at length they formed an opening large enough for one man to creep through at a time. When the next morning broke the treacherous Agha lay dead, with every man of his garrison around him: and the gentleman who was acting as host to the Sheikh and ourselves this evening had been there and then appointed successor. Presumably he was a "sure man."

Our supper consisted of bowls of whey, and of rice with pieces of chicken. The Sheikh and eight or ten of his principal henchmen ate with us, all helping themselves out of the common dishes with wooden ladles and spoons. They all ate extremely sparingly; but this was probably out of etiquette, the Sheikh himself setting the example because he was feeling indisposed. Upon another occasion, when the Sheikh came to call upon us, his four attendants were credited with having consumed a whole sheep![88]

To his own men the Sheikh spoke but rarely, though pleasantly and often smilingly; and they never seemed to speak to him unless they had been first addressed. With us (as he spoke only Kurdish) he had to converse through an interpreter; and the matters debated for the most part concerned the petty politics of the countryside. He bewailed the universal lawlessness, which, he said (we fear rather inaccurately), was as bad for Kurds as for Christians; and observed that it was strange that neither England nor Russia seemed capable of bringing in reform.

"You have gone to India," he protested, "and you stay there, though you are not wanted. Why cannot you come to us who do want you? You would be welcomed everywhere here."

Such feelings are well-nigh universal among all the more reputable chieftains. They would appreciate any strong Government, no matter of what nation or creed. The only folk really content with the present condition of Asiatic Turkey are those who have merited hanging: and we grant that this class would poll strong.{146}

Hearing that we were returning to England within a few months at the latest, the Sheikh volunteered to accompany us—of course with an adequate "tail." He would call on the Archbishop of Canterbury and get him to establish schools in his villages; and then he would go on to see King George at Windsor, with whose aid he made no question he could arrange for the settlement of Kurdistan. Alas! We could hold out no hopes. But the suggestion was made in dead earnest; and we fear that when we did start homewards we were careful not to let the Sheikh know.

Finally he desired to consult us medicinally. He was troubled with an affection of the eyes[89]—in point of fact trachoma—and begged us to give him some medicine which was capable of affording relief. We could do nothing for him at the time; but shortly afterwards we were able to bring up an English doctor from the C.M.S. hospital at Mosul and let the Sheikh have the benefit of his professional skill.

It then transpired that in the interval he had consulted a native practitioner; a wandering Yezidi medicine-man who had recently drifted to Barzan. The Yezidi had diagnosed the watering of the eyes as due to an excess of moisture behind the eye-balls, and had proposed running a red-hot skewer through the Sheikh's head from temple to temple, in order to dry up the "superfluous moisture" at the fountain head! This horrifying suggestion was both made

and received quite seriously. But the Sheikh, very reasonably, had elected to consult the English doctor first. We did not feel much surprised at his Holiness's reluctance to submit to this treatment: but we did feel some admiration for the heroic assurance of the Yezidi doctor in proposing it. Being pierced through the temples with a red-hot skewer would not be a pleasant way of dying; but it would be luxury compared with the sort of devices which the Sheikh's followers might be expected to practise on the operator, by way of obtaining consolation for the patient's untimely decease.{147}

The Sheikh was, we fear, rather crestfallen to find that the English doctor also wished to operate; and stipulated that he should first see the operation practised on one of his train (who had nothing the matter with him at all). The *vile corpus* was quite willing; but unfortunately the doctor jibbed at it, and eventually decided to prescribe a slower and less certain treatment. We hope that this will prove adequate: but we should have felt sorely tempted to perform a sham operation on the volunteer, in order to overcome the Sheikh's reluctance to submit himself to the real one.

There was no room for us to lodge that night in the Agha's castle. The place was already more than full with the Sheikh's train and the Agha's household. Accordingly his Holiness presently dismissed us, coming again to the stair-head to do so, and sending a gentleman cateran to guide us to a house in the village which he had ordered to be reserved for our use. Here he came next morning to see us a little before daybreak, to make his *adieux* on departure, and to return (as he phrased it) the call which we had made on him the night before. This was, however, only a formal call, and lasted a very few minutes. He was anxious to start his day's journey, and soon rode off towards the Oramar ferry with his picturesque ruffians in his train.

We did not start for another hour. We had first to consume the breakfast which our host the Agha had brought down for us; and, moreover, as all the Sheikh's train had got to be transported across the river, it would obviously be at least an hour before the ferry was available for our use. Furthermore the Agha could urge that we had no cause whatever to hurry. We were bound for the little village of Erdil, reported only a three hours' journey; and we had much better wait "till the sun had got into the valley" and had warmed up the frosty air a little so as to make riding more pleasant. In the alternative he suggested that we had better not go at all, because the road was infamous, and riding absolutely impossible. "Horses couldn't go, and mules couldn't go, and Englishmen couldn't walk." But we were pledged to visit Erdil, so we{148} over-ruled this objection. Moreover, we felt it highly impolitic to admit that there was any place in existence where "Englishmen couldn't walk."

Erdil is a tiny derelict Christian village situated in the Oramar valley a little above its confluence with the Zab. All the surrounding villages are inhabited by Kurds and Moslems; and as from year's end to year's end it is hardly ever visited by any outside Christian, Rabban Werda had begged us earnestly at least to give it a call. Moreover we might make discoveries. Erdil was reputed to possess some "old books" which it was willing to show to Rabbi Dr. Wigram, and had sent us one Ibrahim, an Erdilite, who promised to lead us to the *cache*. "Old books," in ninety-nine cases out of one hundred, are apt to prove not worth the seeking. But a scholar would never forgive himself for missing the hundredth chance.

The Oramar river is a noble stream, not inferior to the Zab in volume, gushing forth from a grim rocky portal which notches the Zab's mountain wall. We were assured that no European had ever yet traversed its gorges; and the assertion is certainly corroborated by the fact that the best

map of these regions leaves this corner perfectly blank. In view of the repute of the road we felt half inclined for an instant to leave our animals at Suryi, and call again for them on returning. But we thought this would be too great a temptation for even a friendly Agha, and finally resolved to take them along.

Crossing the Oramar by the ferry, and keeping up the left bank of the river, we entered almost immediately a magnificent rocky ravine. On either hand rose gaunt and tawny precipices fully two thousand feet in altitude, scored all over their upper faces with the lines of the contorted strata, and thinly clothed near the bases with gnarled and stunted oak scrub. A deep, green, rapid river filled the whole of the narrow invert, and this channel was thickly cumbered by a selection of some of the very largest boulders that we have ever seen. Apparently there are many deep pockets just behind the faces of the precipices; and the water collecting in these, splits away the outer wall when it{149} freezes, and sheds the gigantic fragments into the chasm. Not a few of these fallen masses must have been as big as the Marble Arch.

The pathway did not belie the report we had heard of it at Suryi. It scrambled along the steep bank above the river; narrow, broken, and half strangled among blocks of fallen stone. Three times that morning we had to unload the mules, hand the packs across the obstructions, and load again on the further side. Our red-turbanned cateran, who still led us, would pause now and then in the pathway, indicating the landscape at large with a flourish of his arm like a showman, and regarding us with a triumphant grin. But whether he wished to express his admiration of the romantic scenery, or his appreciation of its defensive capabilities, or merely to apprise us that Erdil lay absolutely on the summit of everything—as in fact it did—we were not quite able to decide.

This gorge was a few months later the scene of a notable

exploit, achieved by the Sheikh of Barzan at the expense of those *hostes humani generis* the Heriki Kurds. This horde of wandering robbers, the bane of all settled communities, are wont (as already related) to migrate each spring and autumn to and fro between Mosul and Urmi. They can travel by several routes; but all routes converge upon one point—the "Bridge of Rocks" over the Zab a little above Suryi. Here the Zab, as it issues from the mountains, is throttled (like the Wharfe at Bolton) into a narrow crack between shelving slabs of rock. The slabs are deeply undercut, and the depth of the crack must be considerable; for at one point, where a big rock table rises in mid current, the great river can be crossed in two strides!

Here the Heriki always pass over, at a point where the width of the river is about twenty-five feet. They build a bridge for themselves every spring, and it lasts till the next winter floods. This is the sole piece of honest and useful work which is ever achieved by those incorrigible plunderers; and out of it accordingly a remorseless Nemesis has fashioned "a whip to scourge them." Here the Government posts its troops when it wishes to collect their taxes; and if they{150} have injured any of the Sheikh of Barzan's villages, he exacts compensation here.

Now the previous autumn, on their downward journey, the Heriki had lifted two or three thousand sheep belonging to some Christian villages. The villagers appealed to the English, and the English to the Government; but of course there was not the least chance of obtaining any redress. The following spring, however, when the Heriki were nearly due again, we received a visit from the Sheikh of Barzan, who himself (though he did not say so) seemed to have a crow to pick with the tribe. "See here, Effendim," he argued; "the *Hukumet* can never get those sheep for you. We know they haven't got troops enough to get their own taxes this year. Now supposing it were suggested to the *Vali* that *I* should be appointed to

collect those taxes. Perhaps it is even possible I might get back some of the sheep."

The Effendi shrugged his shoulders, and did not think much would come of it; but the astute old *Vali* of Mosul saw the humour of the notion at once. It was quite true he had given up hope of getting the Heriki's taxes. He even anticipated difficulty in getting the Sheikh of Barzan's. This scheme would lubricate the bearings most admirably in both directions: and the Sheikh was appointed tax-collector *pro hac vice* by return of post.

The Heriki came down to their bridge, rejoicing to find it unoccupied. They crossed, and pushed on to Suryi, and the Sheikh broke down the bridge behind. They entered the Oramar valley; and a few miles up they found the "Boys of the Belt" barring it, with the Sheikh's *Ban* and *arrière Ban* posted on the crags around them; and received a polite demand-note from his Holiness the *Fermier Général* requesting immediate payment of taxes, sheep, *and costs*.

Even a Government regiment could hardly have got so much without fighting; but the Sheikh had thrown his net so deftly that his captives could not even kick. There was nothing for it but to pay, and look pleasant, and this the Heriki chiefs did with what grace they could. We{151} confess that we doubt grievously whether any large percentage of sheep got back to their original owners; but all the country was jubilant to see the original biters so badly bit.

We held our course up the valley for about three hours—and a bittock; and at this point Ibrahim the Erdilite cheerfully observed that we were just half way. As he had previously assured us that the total distance was three hours we were provoked to "pour cold words on him." All sorts of things get "poured" in Syriac: you "pour" your guest into bed; you "pour" your enemy into prison;[90] you "pour a howl" at a man when you shout at him from a distance; and to "pour cold words" upon him is to "give

him a bit of your mind." However, we could not blame poor Ibrahim very severely for a fault which he shares with all his nation—a total inability to conceive any measurement of time.

Soon after we bore to the right and entered a tributary valley; a narrower gorge, dark and chilly, where the pools still lay hard frozen all along the shadier side. The path rose more steeply now with a spiral twist to the right like the final turn of a corkscrew. We were rising on to the top of the precipice which had overshadowed our morning's march. The last pitch was the steepest of any; but here the ground was less rugged, and a few sketchy outlines of terraces tried to pose as cultivated fields. At last we emerged on a tiny plateau, a sprocket on the slope of the mountain, and beheld the dozen rough stone cabins which compose the village of Erdil.

Erdil is not the remotest spot on earth; for beyond it we could descry another and yet remoter Kurdish village some five hours further up the vale. But it is at least the remotest spot we are ever likely to get to. A site for an eagle's eyrie rather than for an abode of man. Thrust out on a little green tongue between two abysmal valleys it commands a superb panorama of the mountains which lie{152} to the northward; range succeeding to range in seven successive *sierras* till they culminate in the snowy crests of Sat and Jilu, no less than fourteen thousand feet high. And in all that craggy wilderness there was scarcely a vestige of habitation. No wonder the villagers were excited by the advent of visitors from the world beyond.

The populace poured out to greet us. They conducted us to the house of the village *rais* or head man. They installed us in his one room in the seat of honour by the fireplace; and thronged in eagerly after us, men, women, and children to kiss our hands. They were by no means an ill-looking crowd, and many of the girls were quite well favoured; dark haired, but fair complexioned; sturdy and

deeply bronzed. The men wore the usual mountain dress; [91] and the women were clad in figured blue smocks and turbans, girt at the waist with blue sashes, and wearing their long open sleeves knotted together behind them in order to keep the ends out of the way. The usual full dress of the mountain women consists of a smock reaching from the neck to about midway between knee and ankle; and a jacket of the same length worn over it, folded across in front, and slit up as high as the waist on either side. The whole is girt round with a sash; and on their heads they wear kerchiefs, or (in the Tkhuma district) little round caps edged with silver coins. Their hair is worn down their backs, plaited in three, four, or five long pigtails, with a six-inch horse-hair tassel worked in at the end of each plait. The smocks are usually of some figured material, but striped stuff is commoner for the jackets; and the colours which they chiefly favour are Indian red or indigo blue. Usually they go barefoot in their villages, but when they are on a journey they wear a sort of brogue like the men. [92]

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The *rais'* house was a typical sample of the ordinary mountain cabin; walled with rough stone rubble, and floored with beaten earth. The low, flat, smoke-blackened ceiling was formed with unsquared poplar stems, upon which was spread a bed of brushwood[93] roofed over with a thick layer of mud. The mud of course cracks in dry weather and the roof becomes very leaky; but it can be quickly consolidated with the little stone roller which is kept on the roof for the purpose, and thus be made once more watertight as soon as the rains return. The *tanura*, or fireplace, is a beehive-shaped hole dug out in the centre of the floor,[94] and the smoke finds an exit (eventually) through a hole in the roof above. There are no windows whatever, and the doorway is a very low one; and thus in most cases the smoke-hole serves the inmates for skylight

as well.

Poor Erdil! Forgotten and isolated, and steeped in poverty and ignorance, it supplies an apt illustration of the conditions of life which prevail among the Kurdish-owned Christian villages in the mountains. Conditions which were commoner still before the advent of the Archbishop's Mission, and which are still all too common in certain outlying districts like Bohtan. Indeed, in many respects Erdil deserves to be congratulated. Politically, as the inhabitants themselves admitted, they have no great cause to complain. Their owner is the Agha of Suryi; and consequently their over-lord is the Sheikh of Barzan, who is nicknamed "the Sheikh of the Christians," because he treats his Christian vassals so well. His tolerance secures them from persecution, and his vigorous rule from raiding; and they gave him the same testimonial that was given in old days to King Brian Boru in Ireland, that you "might{154} safely leave a gold bracelet on a bush by the road in his domain."

But religiously they were left destitute. Their Patriarch seemed to have forgotten them. All the surrounding villages were Moslem, and their nearest co-religionists were a long day's journey away. They had their church and their service books, and a parson's glebe and cottage; but thirty years had elapsed since last they had a priest of their own in the village, and it was but seldom that even a wandering deacon had visited them during all that time. For thirty years they had no one to celebrate their services, no one to marry them, no one to baptize their children, no one to bury their dead; and one of the first requests that they proffered to "Rabbi Mr. Wigram" was that he would at least recite the Church of England burial service over the graves of those who had died within the last few years. Surely it is no small credit to them that under such circumstances they remained even nominally Christian; and we feel some satisfaction in recording that a little time

after our visit their Patriarch found himself able to send them the priest whom they desired.

The "old books" which they had promised to show us proved (as we had more than half expected) to be only the usual Church Service books.[95] They had kept them jealously hidden in an underground cave in a vineyard; knowing vaguely that they were somehow sacred, but otherwise quite ignorant of their contents, for, of course, not a man in the village could read. The cave must have been quite a dry one, for the books had not suffered in any way; and we cannot doubt that on our departure they were again committed to the *cache*.{155}

The church was a well-built stone edifice, dating possibly from the sixteenth century; and though disused for so long a period, it was kept clean and in good repair. Within it that Sunday evening we recited our English Evensong; the villagers standing round reverently and joining in the Amens, the only word they could understand. The "*Sheikh Birader Effendi*" must confess that this strange little service was to him one of the most impressive in which he has ever shared.

The wild rough life of the villagers was reflected in the supper that they provided for us. Where else might one dine on ibex collops and bread made of acorn meal? The latter sounds somewhat unpalatable, but was in fact not at all bad eating. The queer little oaks which grow in Kurdistan bear very large acorns almost as big as small walnuts; and these are not nearly so bitter as English acorns but rather like chestnuts in taste. Often they are roasted and eaten as we eat chestnuts in England; but generally they are ground to meal for breadmaking, and mixed with an equal proportion of barley meal. The natives grow a little wheat likewise, so wheaten bread is not quite unknown to them; but of this, as is to be expected, they get only a very small supply.

It was while we were breakfasting next morning that

Erdil produced its final originality in the way of diet. Some hunters had come in overnight, and had brought with them the carcass of a boar. They had cut him up for convenience of transport; but his huge hoofs (as big as a cow's) and his bristly iron-grey hide proved that he must have been a truly formidable monster: and for five piastres (ten pence) they sold us a big chunk of the meat. His hide was the most valuable part of him, and for this they hoped to obtain as much as two mejidies (eight shillings), since it made such excellent shoes. It seemed little short of a crime to allow so magnificent a pelt to be so ignominiously disposed of; but we did not see, if we purchased it, how we were to carry it away.

Mindful of the difficulties we had found in bringing our beasts up to Erdil, we determined in taking them down again{156} to try and lighten their loads. Our own personal belongings were consigned to two stalwart porters, who undertook to guide us by a short cut, practicable only for pedestrians; while our beasts were to make the long circuit and meet us at the mouth of the gorge.

A few weeks later, on the Flushing packet, the steward eyed that baggage dubiously, and opined we should need "two strong porters" to carry it up to the train. At his words there arose in our minds a vision of two grizzled Syrians carrying all that baggage on their shoulders, for three hours, with scarcely a breather, across the face of a precipice which would have made the steward's hair stand on end! As a matter of fact each load (though it certainly looked overwhelming) totalled up to about sixty pounds, which is the load of a porter on the Alps.

Half an hour we ascended gradually and slantingly along the face of the mountain; and then the ground vanished from under us with a suddenness which took away our breath. The cliff broke away from our toes sheer down to the river beneath us, a drop (to compute it by guesswork) of something like two thousand feet. It was a grand, if

somewhat a dizzy, spectacle; but our guides never checked for an instant. They skipped over the lip of the precipice, and went tripping along a ledge on the face of it, as if they considered such travelling the most ordinary thing in the world. This then was the real "three hours' route" which led from Erdil to Suryi, the path where "horses couldn't go, and mules couldn't go, and Englishmen couldn't walk."

With regard to the horses and mules we endorse the description most cordially; but for ordinary capable pedestrians it was not so very terrible after all. True, it looked rather a fly-on-the-wall business when seen from a little distance; but the ledges, if narrow, were firm, and there was generally plenty of hand hold. Moreover the rocks themselves, though they had looked absolutely vertical when seen from below the previous morning, all proved to be more or less sloping and not quite destitute of brushwood; so it is possible one might have recovered{157} oneself even had one slipped from the path. The worst bits were at the beginning and end of our traverse, where the track led over steeply tilted slabs. Here our European nailed boots refused to bite on the surface, and the porters in their hempen brogues got across much more happily than we. These hempen brogues are almost universally worn by the hillmen, and are admirable footwear for rock work; but they need patching every evening to be ready for the journey next day. Even English boots, however, cannot long stand this sort of travelling. Let them be made ever so strongly they are cut to pieces in three months.

Half way across the face of the precipice, while pausing to rest a few minutes, we were able by means of our glasses to see our horses coming on behind. They were then just turning into the main valley, having accomplished about half their journey; and though we had given them an hour's start at Erdil, we had fully two hours to wait for them at the mouth of the Oramar gorge.{158}

CHAPTER VIII

A MASTER OF MISRULE

(NERI AND JILU)

THE valley in which Barzan lies is a great fold in the earth's surface, running due east and west from Jezireh on the Tigris past Amadia to the mountains on the Persian frontier; a distance of about 120 miles. It forms a sort of huge natural moat to the mountain citadel of Hakkiari; and the counterscarp is represented by the series of lower parallel ridges which rise behind Akra, Sheikh Adi and Rabban Hormizd, overlooking Mosul plain.

This great trench appears continuous, but is, in fact, occupied successively by four distinct rivers which break into it from the northern mountains, run for some little distance along it, and then break out again towards the south. The Zab takes possession at about mid-distance and runs eastward for thirty-five miles or so, its section thus roughly coinciding with the jurisdiction of his Holiness of Barzan: and the extreme eastern section is occupied by the Neri river, which descends from the Persian mountains to unite its waters with the Zab.

Our road does not get any easier as we enter the Neri valley. All travel in fact is impossible anywhere in the neighbourhood of the stream. The track keeps high up on the slope of the Sat range, crossing one tributary gorge after another, and the incessant ascents and descents are formidably rugged and steep. The path is exceedingly narrow, and the slope not far short of precipitous: and the traveller feels rather as if he were riding along the gutter of a steep-pitched roof.

We had companions on the way; for the Heriki Kurds{159} were in the act of conducting their usual

migration from Mosul plain to the upland pasture of Tergawar.[96] Thus we were constantly passing their large flocks of sheep, and parties of their well-armed men-folk; a feat that was sometimes made ticklish by the exceeding narrowness of the road. As far as we were concerned, they were harmless companions enough. The "Boy of the Belt" whom the Sheikh of Barzan had sent with us was ample security against any attempt being made on our mightinesses; and they seemed as pleasant and jolly a set of brigands as a man need wish to meet. It is true that we had a slight misunderstanding with one particular shepherd; but that was misapprehension pure and simple, and brought about no evil results. The lad was so picturesque an object as he strode up the pass in front of his sheep, clad in his rough cloak with long gun, shepherd's crook, and pipe all complete, that we begged him to do us the favour of standing still for a moment, in order that we might secure his portrait. Our friend, however, was new to the camera, and (very pardonably) thought that it was a lethal weapon. He fled like a hare to the cover of the nearest rocks, and prepared to shoot us thence; nor could any blandishments make him relax his attitude of suspicion. Recent events had made him distrustful of anything that looked Governmental.

If, however, the Heriki were just friendly travelling companions for us, they were regarded much in the light of an annual migration of wolves by all the villages on the road. These were all standing to arms till the danger should have passed—the sheep penned in folds close to the houses, the women all within doors, and the men with guns in hand, much inclined to shoot at the stranger first and ask whether he did not mean mischief after. A little *yourt*[97] that we purchased at one place was only handed out to us through one loop-hole while the master of the house kept us covered with a gun from another. Albeit when we had duly handed{160} over coin of the realm in payment, that

gentleman became effusively friendly and apologetic—through his closed and barred door.

Really, these precautions were not uncalled for. The Heriki carry off everything that happens to fall in their way, as incidents already recorded to testify, and "stealis and reifis" with as much impunity as the "common thiefis of Liddisdail" in old Sir R. Maitland's day.

They plainly throw the country rydis,
I trow the mekil deil thame gydis!
Quhair thay onset,
Ay in thair gait,
Thair is na yet nor dor thame bydis.

Poor fellows, they were rather out of humour too, because things had not been going quite well with them. Hitherto, it had been easy to avoid all the attentions of the tax-collector by a proper timing of their migrations, coupled with a little *bakhshish* to officials; and at the worst they could always go over the border to Persia out of the jurisdiction. Now, however, their condition had greatly deteriorated. Persia had gone so much farther off owing to recent changes, and Ottoman officials were to be found even in the summer pastures which had been free of them before. Thus does a "rectification of frontier," such as Turkey was then carrying out at the expense of Persia,[98] bring unmerited trouble upon quiet folk.

We stayed for one night in the village of Sat, which gives its name to the whole range. The place is Christian (Nestorian), but its inhabitants have a name for quarrelsomeness and love of intrigue that makes them a proverb among their not very peaceful nation. Such at least is the description given of their character by their own Patriarch, who is, we suppose, the highest authority possible on such a matter; and we give the legend illustrative of the fact, as current among the nation and recounted to us by his Grace himself.

A woman of Sat was once on a journey, near to a Nestorian{161} village unnamed, when she met an old acquaintance on the road outside. This was no less a person than Satana himself, who was sitting on a stone, weeping bitterly.

"O Brother, what is your trouble?" said the sympathizing lady.

"I am broken-hearted," sobbed the poor fiend; "I have been trying to sow strife in this village for seven years and have not raised a single quarrel in that time; I must give it up."

"Cheer up! let me try my hand;" said the lady; and the couple went together to the village, where they found a bridal party just leaving the church. What measures were taken by the woman history (prudently) sayeth not; but within half an hour bride and bridegroom were pulling one another's hair, and the friends of each were taking part in a very pretty fight.

"Now you can stay here and be happy," said the woman of Sat to her friend.

"Thank you," said Satana, "But while you are here, I really think my presence would be superfluous."

One is completely outside the power of the Government in the Barzan-Neri district, but not quite out of touch with its officials notwithstanding. In one of the remotest of villages, in a deep gorge running up into the Sat range, and called Bi-Kar, we actually found a Government mudir. It is true that he had no power; and any collecting of taxes that took place in the neighbourhood was done by wholly unauthorized agencies; but there he was, presumably as a testimony to the existence of the *Hukumet*.

Like most Ottoman officials, he was delightfully courteous to the chance visitor; and in this case perhaps the welcome was not mere politeness, but real joy in speaking to an educated man once more. For years in that remote

glen, he had enjoyed no conversation with any but policemen and Kurds. His story was typical of those of a good many of the young Ottoman official class. Educated at Stamboul, in the college for Government servants, he had (like most of the younger men of his day) been attracted by the "Young Turk" propaganda, and its hopes for a reformed and revived{162} Ottoman Empire. Something brought his reforming sympathies to light; and a prompt order from Abdul Hamid dispatched him to this corner of the earth, with a black mark against his name, and no chance of promotion, or any sort of career.

Three years passed in that exile, and then the revolution gave him some hope of a change. But the years that had elapsed since then had only been evidence that he was forgotten by the new régime as thoroughly as the old one could have wished; and here was he, an educated and capable man, settling down while still under thirty as a soured, disappointed minor official. He was one of the many tragedies of Ottoman rule.

Laboriously enough, we pushed on for three days' travel, a daily ascent and descent of 3000 feet marking our progress. The tracks were always feasible enough for mules, though as viewed from a distance they had a painfully dizzy aspect; and the deep gorges between each pair of ridges were places of marvellous beauty. The valley of Heriki lives in our memory as perhaps the most exquisite of all. We descended the crags and steep slopes of the mountain side—coming down 2000 feet in half an hour on foot, though of course the animals might take four times as long—to a glen that was one garden, thick with walnut and poplar trees, interspersed with figs and with vines trained from tree to tree, all in the glory of their best foliage. Trees flourished here luxuriantly from the soil and climate, and were respected for the one reason that makes a Kurd respect anything; for the whole glen is one great cemetery. As its name implies, it is the original home of

the nomad tribe with whom we had just been journeying. From this spot there set out the five eponymous ancestors of the five septs that make the tribe to-day; and hither every man of name and fame is borne for burial among the great ones of his house. There is much romance about this most turbulent of nomad tribes; and it is not diminished by the fact that (if legend tells true) they were Christians once; in the days when Nestorian bishops, nomad like their flocks, had for diocese "the tents of the Kurds." One relic of their ancient{163} Christianity they are said to bear with them still (we follow the account given by old Nestorian priests), namely, the head of a Christian martyr, one of the several saints George of Eastern legend. This is the palladium of their tribe, and is borne about in a chest either by the principal chief among them, or by some holy mollah in the clan.

A three days journey from Barzan takes the traveller to the domain of the great rival of the chief of that ilk, viz. the Sheikh of Shamsdin, who has his palace at Neri. This man is at least as powerful as his neighbour; and indeed Obeid-Allah of Shamsdin, grandfather of the present Sheikh, had thoughts of carving out for himself a separate principality, a buffer between Turkey and Persia. He was able to invade the latter country in force, and to besiege the city of Urmi for some weeks in the early "seventies." He failed, however (though the success of the Sheikh of Koweit in an analogous scheme shows that it was not impossible under favourable circumstances); and he and his son Abd-l-Kadr were removed to Constantinople as state prisoners, while his second son, Saddik or Zadok, was left as head of the tribe. Shrewder than his father, Saddik was content with the reality of power, and accumulated wealth by tobacco smuggling on the most magnificent scale. His caravans went down to Persia, often 100 mules strong, in open defiance of the "Regie" officials; and a large portion of the proceeds was invested in rifles, smuggled from Russia to

Urmi. If the troops in Trans-Caucasia were not much libelled, many of them came from their barracks, in exchange for *vodka*!

A *kaimakam*, and an inspector of the "*Regie*" (the Governmentally recognized tobacco monopoly) both reside at Neri; and are generously provided with apartments in the fine house built by the Sheikh out of the profits of the industry which their official duty is to stop. But both of these domestic animals are most gratifyingly tame.

Not all of the Sheikh's income went in rifles, or even in *bakhshish*. He once wrote politely to the author, asking for a recommendation to an English bank, as he had some savings to deposit with them. The writer named a bank or two; and knowing that his Holiness expected ten to fifteen{164} per cent. on money ready at call, did not think much would follow. But eventually some thousands of pounds did actually find their way to Lombard Street; for this prince of tobacco smugglers was in very solvent circumstances indeed! A Kurdish brigand chief with a large banking account in England sounds a wildly impossible conception. Yet William Hickey records how another wholesale smuggler hailed a homeward-bound China clipper in mid channel, and purchased all her skipper's private stock of tea with a cheque for £800, which was accepted without the least demur. So such things were certainly done in the England of 1770!

Saddik was a terrible oppressor of Christians in his early days, and his deliberate murder of one particular bishop, whom he had invited to his house as a guest, shocked even the robust Kurdish conscience.[99] Years brought wisdom, however; and he realized that to massacre or dispossess good cultivators was bad economy. So such as remain are allowed to live, though it must be owned that their condition is but very little removed from serfdom. Among these properties of his is an Archbishop. The second

dignitary of the Nestorian Church, the Metropolitan Mar Khanan-Ishu, resides in the Sheikh's country. He lives of course in his own monastic house, and is allowed the use of his own property; but he is practically a prisoner in the hands of "that Great One," maintained much as the Norman adventurers in Italy maintained certain Popes, as the readiest instrument for governing their own subjects.

Both officially and personally, as hereditary Sheikh of Shamsdin, and as an Imaum of eminence, Sheikh Saddik had a great reputation among Moslems, and knotty problems came to him for solution. Thus it was at his "*diwan*" that a perplexed tribesman presented himself one day with a fine cock under his arm, and the query, "What ought to be done with this fowl? It has taken to preaching Christianity!" He was asked for an explanation, and told how three times in his hearing the bird had proclaimed,{165} "*The* religion is the religion of Jesus." And sure enough when the cock was produced in evidence it immediately repeated at the top of its voice "*Din Din el Seyidna Isa*"; or at least what all present unanimously interpreted as being those words. That it was a miracle none doubted: but was it of Allah, or of Sheitan? If the latter, of course the owner could wring the cock's neck and the incident would be closed. If the former, ought he, a good Mussulman, to obey it and turn Christian?

The Sheikh considered the matter; and gave an answer that at once showed some skill in casuistry, and was as bitter and well merited a gibe at Christian divisions as one could wish. The miracle was declared to be from Allah; and the cock must in no wise be slain, but preserved as an honoured and sacred fowl. However, there were many sects of Christians, and each one claimed that its particular version of Christianity was "*the* religion of *Seyidna Isa*." The cock had given no evidence as to which was the right one; so, until all Christians should agree together, or till the bird should give another and more explicit oracle, no true

believer need do anything. It is an episode that shows many aspects of the Oriental mind.

Sheikh Saddik was a ruffian, but a fine and strong character withal. His son and successor, Taha, has inherited all his ruffianism without the stronger qualities. At the age of nineteen years he weighed precisely that number of stone; and when a day's journey was unavoidable, it took two sturdy mules, with specially padded saddles, to bear his gross carcass along the way. He has the bad taste to wear European clothes (or what he takes to be such, corduroy trousers and butcher boots), and presents a strong family resemblance to the "Claimant." His younger brother, Sheikh Musa, once fell foul of the British military Consul from Van, in a way that has since been vigorously impressed on his memory. The officer in question, accompanied by the writer, arrived at this place in the spring of 1909; and the party was of course entertained as guests of the house in the absence of the master. We had arrived at noon, and had sent the horses out to pasture and rest, when one of{166} the *katarjis* came running up with tidings much resembling those of the servants of Job, and in much the same state of mind as that of those unfortunates. The Sabaeans, represented by the personal servants of the Sheikh, had come down on the animals as they were feeding, and disregarding all protests had carried off every one!

There was of course a tremendous storm, for a deadlier insult to guest and British Consul could hardly be imagined; and the tame *kaimakam* was required to procure the instant return of the stolen property. He, poor man, was grievously perplexed between his fear of the Consul on the one hand, and his fear of his proprietor on the other. Between the two, he collapsed in something very like tears, ejaculating "What can I do? They were the Sheikh's men who took them." He did send out his two *zaptiehs*, with a consular kavass, to bring back the beasts; but as

soon as they were outside the village, those two worthies sat themselves on the ground and informed the kavass that, *kaimakam* or no *kaimakam*, they were not going to do anything against the Sheikh's followers if they knew it!

The animals were returned that evening; and it came out that Sheikh Musa had suddenly conceived the idea that he would give a picnic to his womenkind; wherefore the order "bring horses" had been issued, and obedience to it was expected.

"There are no horses, your Greatness," the servants had said.

"No horses? There are horses!" pointing to the meadow where the Consul's animals were at grass.

"But those are the Consul's, your Greatness."

"The Consul's! Am I Sheikh, or am I not?"

So the horses were brought; and it is to be hoped that the trouble that followed, and the fine that had to be paid, was a salutary lesson to everybody.

Of late years, a family quarrel has rather diminished the power of Sheikh Taha. His uncle Abd-l-Kadr, son of Obeid-Ullah, returned from Constantinople with the claim to be (what he is by all laws of primogeniture) the Head of the House. Fighting followed between the two; a proceeding{167} which would not have done much harm to anyone had the Kurds only fought among themselves. Naturally, however, the poor serfs of Christians (whose allegiance both parties claimed) suffered as those do suffer who have the misfortune to find themselves between the upper and nether millstones.

Both Sheikhs were arrested, but a compromise was arranged. Abd-l-Kadr agreed to accept a liberal allowance from the family funds; and to live in Stamboul, the city he knew, rather than set up as a savage chief in Kurdistan.

A day's journey from the Sheikh's house at Neri brings the traveller to the land of the Christian "*ashirets*" of Jilu

and Baz.

Ashiret is a word that strictly means "tribe" or clan; but as descriptive of status it is contrasted with "*rayat*" or subject; and means that the bearers of the name pay tribute (when it can be got out of them) and not taxes. The Ottoman Government is only now extending its power, as a practical thing, into Kurdistan at all. All the Mussulman dwellers in the land were until lately "*ashiret*," and much in the same position as the Highlanders "beyond the line" in days previous to the "forty-five." A fair proportion of the Christian dwellers there, happening to have arms, are "*ashiret*" as well.

Those who are unarmed are in the unpleasant position of having to serve two masters (both of them abominably bad ones), and are "*rayat*" both to the Government, as far as its power goes; and to the Kurdish chiefs, as far as they can enforce theirs. The whole position is comprehensible to those who live among the people; but to the foreigner, it appears to be (and is) the negation of law, order, and all that we mean by good government. It is the old life of the highlands of Scotland, complicated and worsened immensely by the division between Christianity and Islam.

Still, among the *ashirets* who carried arms, whether Christian or Moslem, the position was by no means intolerable a generation ago. Besides it was extremely picturesque. The various tribes fought one another freely; and of course{168} the feuds usually, though not always, followed the religious and racial line of division.

Still, arms were approximately equal; and the Christians, though outnumbered, had strong positions to defend, and were of good fighting stock, as men of Assyrian blood should be. So, until Abdul Hamid's day, the parties were fairly matched on the whole; and generations of "cross-raiding" had evolved an understanding in the matter, capable of summary statement as "Take all you like, but do not damage what you leave; and do not touch the women."

Thus, live-stock were fair loot, and so were carpets and other house-furniture, and arms of course. But the house must not be burnt, and standing crops and irrigating channels not touched, while a gentlemanly brigand would leave the corn-store alone. Women were never molested when a village of *ashirets* was raided, until a few years ago. And this was so thoroughly understood that it was not necessary even to guard them; a custom which by an interesting parallel prevailed on our own Scotch border in the fourteenth century.[100] When, however (as sometimes happened), a party of Kurds at feud with other Kurds, plundered a Christian village that was "*rayat*" to the chief of the other party, girls might be carried off, with the other live stock. Even so, however, wives were sacrosanct.

Of late years things have changed for the worse in this respect. Women are not always respected now; and the free distribution of rifles among the Kurds has done away with all the old equality. This was done, when the late Sultan raised the "*Hamidie*" battalions; partly for the defence of his throne, partly perhaps with the idea of keeping the Christians in subjection. Now when to odds in numbers you add the additional handicap implied in the difference between Mauser and flint-lock, the position becomes impossible; and the balance has since inclined steadily against the Christian tribes.

The fights of old were not usually very deadly, for though{169} a good deal of home-made powder was burned, these mountaineers are tough, and hard to kill. The writer has known an instance of a Kurd who was shot through the body in a tribal skirmish; after which he walked home, and observed to his wife, "Beastly nuisance this: here is a brand-new shirt, and two holes in it; and it will want washing too!"

Jilu is a curious little mountain canton—a fan of narrow gorges descending from the rugged Galiashin range, the highest peak of which, Supa Durig, approaches 14,000

feet. Their union forms the Oramar River, that considerable tributary of the Zab mentioned in the previous chapter. Nothing but "terrace cultivation" is possible on the bare rocky slopes; and the earth that composes the fields has usually to be carried to the spot where the terrace wall has been built to retain it, in baskets on men's backs. A spot has to be chosen which is reasonably safe from avalanches; else the poor farmer may find, some spring morning, that not only his crop, but his whole field, has been swept away in the night.

Men of Jilu have a harder life than even the average mountaineer of Kurdistan; and hence it is, no doubt, that they have developed the *wanderlust*, which is far more strongly marked in them than in most of their fellow countrymen. They wander everywhere in search of work, though they always drift back to this strange little canton at the end. Starting with nothing but the clothes they stand up in, and very ragged clothes too, they apparently never starve, and occasionally bring back a fortune. Men are to be found in Jilu who helped to build the forts of Port Arthur; and who corrected the writer on certain points connected with that fortress when the siege was being discussed in the patriarch's *diwan*. Who served guns on board the American battleships off Cuba; or have (goodness alone knows how) found some charitable person to give them a university education in America. One of these wanderers brought back £3000; or, to be accurate, brought it to within a few days' journey of his home, when his luck deserted him at last, for he met a party of Kurds, {170} and the robbers made the haul of their wicked lives. It was the cruellest trick of fortune; but he owned to have made the money in one very doubtful trade that these fellows practise; and we could not avoid the feeling that the thief by violence had as good a right to the spoil as had the thief by fraud.

The trade in question is this. Jilu men have made the

discovery that folk in Europe and America have much sympathy with an ancient and struggling church, and are willing to give considerable sums to assist it. So they collect for "schools and orphanages." Men go by the dozen to gather in money, nominally for these objects; but actually spend it on their own needs alone. American police know the trick well, and indeed have invented the term "fake-priest" as descriptive of this branch of the great profession of roguery.

One can feel some sympathy with the rascals who thus answer the old question "why did Allah create fools, if not for the profit of wise men?" They are in absolute and utter poverty; and they know that by going to foreign parts, and there "slinging a yarn" that they would not expect their own people to take seriously, they can gather sums that mean wealth to them. It is a great temptation; and it will continue till such time as charity and common sense begin to run in double harness, and charitable folk at home refuse to extend to these Orientals the trust they would never repose in one of their own countrymen.

Further, tried by their own standards, these Orientals are not cheating. An Eastern does not understand the administration of a Trust. What you give, you give; and may Allah reward you for your charity. But, when you have given it, it is yours no longer; and why should you complain if its owner finds that he needs it for something different to his original intent. You gave it for a school? Well, he really meant to use it for a school then; but afterwards he found that he needed it for his own family. It is his; why not? Narrow-minded man, why use the ugly word thief?

So, while sympathizing with these rascals, we advise no{171} man to give them money; or even to trust the interesting documents they produce, sealed with the patriarchal seal. Forgery is singularly easy in a land where the seal is the sole signature, and any seal-cutter can copy

it from an impression.

So the "*Jiluayi*" wander; reproducing to-day in all details the seller of relics who rode to Canterbury with Chaucer. One enterprising member of the fraternity made a considerable sum by selling in four Russian villages the four feet of the ass on which our Lord rode into Jerusalem; and only got into trouble when the temptation to supply the demand of a fifth village for another foot overpowered his prudence. Another, in India, suffered even worse things. He had gathered about £300 from various places; mainly by his absolute refusal to go away from anywhere till something was given him. But in Malabar he was arrested as a Russian spy, and dragged before a zealous native magistrate. Knowing, by experience at home, the danger of telling the truth to any official, and particularly of owning to the possession of money, he declared that he was a very poor man and had not a penny in the world; thus sticking to the lie, when the truth would probably have secured his safety. The magistrate handed him over to the police to be searched, and they of course found the gold upon him, and appropriated the whole. Then they reproduced their victim in court, saying that as far as they could ascertain he had spoken the truth, and that he really had no money. On this, he was discharged.

The central shrine and cathedral of the district of Jilu is the ancient church of Mar Zeia, a building remarkable enough to merit a word of description to itself. In structure it is not very different from any other mountain church; being a mere rectangular box of stone, with a roof vaulted within and flat without, and arranged according to the usual type of Nestorian building, which we must describe later. It is its contents that are unique.

For centuries, Jilu men who have gone "to countries" (or foreign parts generally) have made a practice of giving gifts to this shrine on their return; and it, unlike other{172} churches, has never been plundered by any foe, for a

reason that will presently appear.

The consequence is that the building contains such a collection of *ex voto* offerings as can hardly be matched in the world, reaching back for one is afraid to say how long. The most modern feature is a grand collection of American clocks, alarm and otherwise, that hang on a cord, touching one another, all across the church. Bells, usually of small size (for half a mule load or 125 lbs. is the strict limit of weight that can be transported in one mass), are hung everywhere; long strings of them decorating the curtain that veils the sanctuary. Vestments for the priests, of Russian cut and make, hang all along the walls; while ostrich eggs and coral speak of the connexion with Malabar. Finally, away at the back, and covered thick with dust, stand rows of "China jars," said to have been brought back thence when this Nestorian church had its bishops at Pekin and Singan in the eighth century, and which connoisseurs would probably think cheap at their weight in gold.

Strangest perhaps of all, if genuine, is the charm that has preserved all these treasures from the spoiler. A *zaptieh* had accompanied us from the seat of government at Neri, and had entered the church with us, reverently removing hat and shoes at the door. He now approached the young bishop who was showing us his treasures, and said "My Lord, you will allow me to see the handkerchief of Mohammed the Prophet?" "By all means," said the bishop; and going to a recess in the wall, he produced thence a bundle of silk wrappings, which were removed one after the other, revealing a piece of plain linen, inscribed with Arabic characters. This either is, or is supposed to be, a *firman* of protection for this church, issued by the Prophet himself, and written on his own napkin. Whether it is, whether it can be, genuine is not for us to say.[101] This is certain at least; that every Kurd believes in its genuineness: and the *zaptieh* bowed before it with the utmost reverence,

placed{173} it on his forehead and eyes for a moment, and finally returned it, with an offering to the shrine which represented about a week's pay. Genuine or not, the fact of its existence has saved this church and its contents from plunder many a time and oft, and will probably continue to do so; though it must be owned that at one terrible outbreak of Moslem fanaticism in the year 1847, not even reverence for the name of the Prophet saved a similar document in the hands of the Patriarchial family from destruction, the members of the family from slaughter, or an even wealthier church from plunder.

We were the guests of the Bishop of Jilu, Mar Sergius, in his very primitive palace; and as we had arrived at noon, spent a good deal of the afternoon "holding *Diwan*" in his reception room—sitting that is in the seat of honour on a low *diwan*, while all the village came to us, and talked of anything and everything that occurred to them. Many of course desired medicine, for any Englishman is a doctor by hereditary right; and always carries with him good "English salt," which is quinine, as well as other drugs.

So, "distribute medicines manfully" is the rule for the traveller here, whether you chance to know anything about the trade or not. Fever you can recognize at any rate, or the patient will recognize it for you; and if you have not the ghost of a notion what the disease is, look doubly wise and administer something harmless and bitter. The nastier the drug, the more it will stimulate the faith of the sufferer, and that, after all, is the essential thing. Speaking generally, you will cure more efficiently when you do not know what the trouble is, than when you do. Only remember certain rules. First, that to give mild aperients to an Oriental is a sinful waste of good drugs; and diminishes faith in foreign medicines, which is worse. Second, if you go by book at all, give three times the "book dose" to an Assyrian, and five times the amount to a Kurd; for then you may produce some sort of effect. This instruction was given to the writer

by men of experience when he was new to the country, and it staggered him for the moment, but he was reassured. "Yes," said a worthy member of the{174} Syrian nation, "it is very difficult to poison a Kurd at all; and if you succeed, it does not much matter."

Still, we own that we have once known an Oriental suffer from an overdose. He had applied to a Syrian friend for an aperient; and the friend (who called himself *hakim* on the strength of three months spent as bottle-washer in an American Mission dispensary) had given him "a strong medicine." Both parties were startled at the result; and as the writer turned up opportunely next day, he was called in as a consultant, and found the victim in a very reduced state indeed after a night spent upon the rack!

"What did you give him?" he asked the *hakim*.

"Croton oil," said he.

"And how much?"

"Oh, not much; only a teaspoonful."

(N.B. half a minim is the maximum allowed by the British Pharmacopœia!)

Persian tea-spoons are not as big as English, so perhaps he had not given much more than thirty times the full dose. The consultant gave it as his opinion that as the patient had survived twenty-four hours, he would recover; and the event justified his wisdom.

There was one case brought to us that afternoon, however, that was quite beyond our skill. A man came with a tale of woe expressed in a mountain dialect that we could not follow; and the bishop had to be impressed as interpreter. He heard, and collapsed in a fit of laughter, gasping out, "He wants a medicine to quiet his wife's tongue, Rabbi."

"Tell him I am not a worker of miracles, my lord," said we.

The most important subject of local politics that came up

for discussion was an attempt recently made by a reforming local governor to take a census of the men of Jilu. A Government official had come among them with papers and ink, and proceeded to write down all their names. When they asked what it was all about, he explained that it was the elections to the *Mejlis-i-Mebussan*, the Turkish Parliament; and that if their names were written down properly they should have a member all to themselves,{175} who should be a man of Jilu, and should live in Constantinople and draw a fine salary, just for sitting in the capital and representing their grievances to the Sultan.

The idea seemed a good one, and folk gave in their names freely, till the census was nearly finished. But then it occurred to them that perhaps they had been hasty, and that these lists might be used for other things than the election of an M.P. What if they were a basis for taxation? or even worse, for the drafting of their young men to the army? The result was that a "strong deputation" went after the Government mudir (who, by the way, was an Armenian), confiscated all his papers and burnt them. He was disposed to think that he was fortunate in that he had not been himself thrown on to the pile.

A casually minded Government took no notice of the little incident, which after all only concerned an Armenian underling.[102] Had it been a real Turkish official, there would probably have been trouble for every one concerned; and a good many more besides.{176}

CHAPTER IX

THE DEBATABLE LAND (GAWAR, TERGAWAR, MERGAWAR)

JILU, take it all round, is the most savage bit of primæval

chaos in all the "*ashiret*" districts of Kurdistan; yet a short journey beyond it brings us to a district which is in a much more advanced stage of geological development, the strange plain of Gawar. Starting in the morning from one of the glens which lie absolutely under the peaks and crags of Galiashin, our caravan has to traverse one of the grandest, narrowest, and rockiest gorges even in this land of wild ravines—the magnificent gorge of Ishtazin. And yet by the evening, after crossing a range that much resembles our own Sussex downs on a large scale, we are camping on an absolutely level plain of great extent—the "*Gawar*."

This word, presumably Kurdish, appears to mean a level plain surrounded by mountains; and it is used, singly and in combination, more than once in the neighbourhood. But our new camping-place is "*the* Gawar" *par excellence*, "The Level." It is the bed of an ancient lake, and so has a general family resemblance to the "morfa" of Tremadoc in North Wales, though the hills surrounding it are considerably higher than Snowdon; and the change from mountain to plain is so abrupt and obvious that one can say definitely to a few yards where one leaves the one and enters on the other. The point is further emphasized, by an old pebble beach.



THE MOUNTAINS OF TKHUMA AND JILU.

From the top of the "Staircase" pass immediately above Amadia. The mountain in the centre is Ghara Dagh on the southern side of Tkhuma. To the left is Galiashin, the dominant peak of Jilu; and Sat Dagh further off upon the right. The crags in the middle distance rise up out of the Zab Gorge.

No. 8

The plain measures about sixteen miles by ten, and is in form an oval with pointed ends, the long axis running nearly north and south. It is absolutely treeless, save for a few poplars round the villages that are scattered over{177} its face. Though but little of the plain is cultivated it is all magnificently fertile; for the black alluvial soil grows anything that will endure the long winter and deep snow natural at an elevation of six thousand feet; and the corn and melons of Gawar are famous throughout the land.

A considerable river, the Nihila or Nile, wanders down the centre and is joined by several others from the high mountains at the sides. This river on leaving the plain flows northward through a deep and fine gorge to join the Albak; and their united streams constitute the Zab.

Being thus a dead level, Gawar looks as easy a place to cross as well can be. We see our destination before us perhaps twelve miles away, and nothing seems to be necessary but to make a bee-line for it. In reality few things are more difficult than crossing this or a similar plain, unless you know the way or have a guide who knows it. The river is bordered with wide swamps; and such fords as exist upon it (and they are not many) can only be approached from certain directions: while the stranger is constantly liable to stumble (like the luckless Duke of Monmouth) on "rhines" or irrigating channels; the muddy bottoms of which are unfordable for animals, except at certain points known only to the villagers around.

A fertile level like this should swarm with villages and carry a large population; but of the villages that once were here (almost all of which were Nestorian Christian) many are now absolutely deserted, and others have become

Kurdish and so do little work in the world. This has been brought to pass, not by the villagers abandoning their Christianity—for that is so rare a thing as to be almost unknown—but by what foreign residents characterize as "the hermit crab Act."

This process is as follows. Given a village of Christians, with Kurds in the neighbourhood: a party of Kurds (men who have probably made their own village too hot to hold them, or who have quarrelled with their chief) come and settle at free quarters in the place as "guests." The villagers cannot turn them out; for the intruders are armed,{178} and they are not; and stingless worker bees can hardly expel sting-bearing drones. If they appeal to the Government for redress, the official is bribed by the intruders to do nothing (the *bakhshish* being extorted from the villagers); and the answer is made "have not these Mussulmans the right to reside where they like?" If any man does head an attempt to evict them, a "dead set" is made at him till he is worried into leaving the village and his land; and this the Kurds immediately appropriate, forcing the other villagers to work it for them without pay. The village mill is usually one of the first places taken, and a liberal percentage of the corn goes as a fee for the grinding of it. Meantime, what the presence of these fellows means for the "*rayats*" in the way of petty oppression, and what the consequences are to the girls of the village, anyone who has some knowledge of human nature can be left to guess for himself.

If the plan prospers other Kurds join; and the leader of the gang presently builds him a small hold, or kala (again with the forced labour of the villagers), and at length the bulk of the Christians are worried out of the country. Only a few are kept, as serfs, to till for their new masters the land that they and their fathers once owned; and what was a Christian village has become Kurd.

If ever one sees a Kurdish village which has good fields, and signs of good cultivation, one can be sure that it was

originally Christian, and that it has gone through this process.

Apart from the brutality of the proceeding, the matter illustrates the impossibility of the Turk as a modern governor, unless he is most radically reformed and supervised. One presumes that what the Government wants is a set of peaceable, tax-paying subjects. Yet here, not one village, but scores of villages, inhabited by peaceable *rayats* who do pay their taxes and ask for nothing better than to be left alone under Ottoman rule; are allowed to be emptied, and filled up by Kurds who let the land go to waste, who never pay taxes at all, and can be trusted *not* to fight for the Turk in any real emergency.{179}

However, the officials of the day benefit by the *bahkshish* that the Kurds pay them. And here we touch the real root of the matter. The Turk is not deliberately aiming at the extirpation of his Christian subjects. He has no deeper policy in his mind than just to go on *eskissi gibi*, "in the same old way," and let the officials fill their pockets in peace. As a man he has many virtues; and there never was an Englishman yet who dealt with him, and did not come to like him: but as a governor he is execrable; in that he is too lazy to see that things go well, and allows an unspeakably corrupt Civil Service to ruin the land as it likes. Will he ever do the one thing that can save him, and allow himself to be administered by some European Power, as Egypt has been? Perhaps a quotation from "Odysseus," shrewdest of European observers of Turkey, can give the answer. "'This country is just one big dish of soup,' said the *Vali*, 'and nobody has any real use for soup except to eat it. We eat in the old-fashioned way, with big spoons; you want to come along with gimlets and bore holes in the bottom of it, and suck. Then you propose that eating with spoons shall be abolished as old fashioned, because you know that we have no gimlets, and don't understand sucking.'"[103]

A level plain like Gawar, with a Government headquarters and garrison at its town of Diza, ought to be as easily controlled a *kaimakamlik* as one could wish. And so it is normally; though an Albanian *kaimakam*, Haidar Beg, did rouse rather a storm when he put a recalcitrant Kurdish chief on a donkey, face to the tail, and rode him in that fashion all round Diza town. Still he had the place in order; "Not a dog barked without leave when Haidar ruled," is the local saying to this day.

Some time after his departure, however, the district was the scene of one of the very few attacks on a British Consul that have taken place in the land. Lawless as the country is, the foreign resident is generally safe; because such trouble follows for everybody if he is interfered with. In twelve years, the writer has only known five deliberate attacks on Europeans (though plenty were planned and did{180} not come off); and only one of the five had fatal consequences,—at least to the European. Three of these attacks were on British Consuls—"for the fellows will go wandering into such dangerous places, just to make maps," as a harassed Ottoman official explained.

In this case the British Consul, accompanied by the writer, had reached the plain of Gawar from Neri. They were "escorted" by a *zaptieh* provided by the Sheikh of that place and belonging to his tribe; and as it was just subsequent to the incident of the stolen horses, escort and travellers were not on the very best of terms. *Zaptieh* and muleteers declared that they would stop, early in the afternoon, at a Kurdish village called Alikhan, at the entry into Gawar plain; while the Englishmen had ordered that a push should be made for Diza. The *zaptieh* waxed so insolent in the dispute that he was summarily dismissed. He dashed off in a fury to the village, and called on the men of the place to come out and plunder the Franks as they passed. These poured out like bees at the call, and a scuffle resulted in which the baggage mule of the party was

captured with the bulk of its load. Only the maps and photographic negatives were salved: and the two Englishmen and their kavass were pursued by the crowd for about half an hour, deep into the swamps towards Diza; while the *zaptieh* (apparently the only man who had a gun) kept firing steadily on them till his cartridges gave out. Perhaps the most discreditable side to the whole affair was that he failed to hit even one of the party in that period; but it was a Turkish Government rifle that he was using; so that probably, under the circumstances, the target was the safest place. The Consul's Serbian kavass begged most earnestly for permission to try "just one shot" in answer; but the Consul knew too well what the result of that one shot might be, and did not wish to kill.

We must add that prompt redress was given on this occasion. Soldiers were dispatched to the guilty village from Diza without delay. The stolen goods were restored; and the two muleteers brought in as prisoners. But the *zaptieh*, the principal culprit, had escaped.{181}

The *kaimakam* had a taste for melodrama, and had the prisoners brought before him immediately. He called upon the Consul for his statement, and then demanded of the prisoners what they had got to say.

These worthies at once paraded an arm (said to be broken) and a black eye (the genuineness of which was past question), and poured out a flood of eloquence. They had marched all day, and were very weary; and had begged of the Consul to let the exhausted beasts feed for one little half-hour before pushing further on. This he had refused, with oaths and vile abuse; beating deponent the while till his arm was broken, and he lay helpless on the grass. Assault on the Consul? Before Allah there had been no such thing. How could they lift a hand against his greatness? Had not the *zaptieh* fired shots? Nay, he had but interceded with the Bey in all humility; and the Bey had turned on him and deponent (raising his head painfully

from the grass) saw the *zaptieh* flying for dear life, while the Consul pursued him, firing shots at him from a revolver!

It was a fine coherent tale, and well told; but the witness's dramatic instinct carried him away in the course of it, and he gesticulated freely with the "broken" arm.

The *kaimakam* rose with the majesty natural to one who combines the offices of judge and jury, and delivered the judgment of the court. "The English do not tell lies; but ye are liars and the sons of liars. Bring fetters, and hale these scoundrels to the dungeon forthwith." Fetters of pantomimic magnitude were brought accordingly; but while they were being put on, the *kaimakam* marred the grandeur of the proceedings by suggesting to the Consul that as he had now two captives on whom he could wreak his vengeance, perhaps he might be disposed to pardon the third, who would be hard to catch!

He was somewhat disappointed on finding that the impracticable Englishman was willing to pardon the two who had been caught; but disposed to insist that the worst criminal must be punished! However, the fugitive was caught and imprisoned later.

As for the two muleteers, they were released in an hour{182} or so at our request; and came to express their hope that the little unpleasantness would not cause any diminution of the customary *bahkshish*! It was not their fault, really; they had been possessed of the Devil at the time, and that was surely excuse enough for poor simple men!

The seat of a governorship of low grade, like a *kaimakamlik*, is always a home of oppression in Turkey. "Jack in office" is not an unknown thing elsewhere; but he is usually not worse than annoying, and is sometimes amusing. In Turkey, however (particularly in the out-of-the-way districts), there is nobody to exercise a wholesome

discipline on Jack, or to care much what he does in small matters.

Further, all the officials at such posts are low down in the scale, whether they have been long in the service or not; and so they have either no character to lose, or else a fortune to make. An elderly man, who has made his money and his name, is sometimes as good a governor as the people are in a condition to appreciate; but not so the junior. Thus it comes to pass that British Consuls of experience say that they have known good *Valis* fairly often, and even decent *mutaserifs* occasionally; but a good *kaimakam* is a *rara avis* indeed. We have known two in ten years; both of them being Albanians, and both gentlemen. But in each case the barbarian was not very far below the surface—any more than he is in an Englishman sometimes.

Thus in a small centre like Diza of Gawar, even the European traveller may occasionally meet with discourtesy; particularly since the Revolution has given the petty official an excuse for saying: "We are civilized and constitutional now; therefore we need not treat these beastly Franks with any more consideration than our own people."

We have even heard of such things as the commandeering of the beasts of an English traveller "for Government service." The act implies that the beasts and their owner are marched off with military baggage or something equivalent, for an unknown distance and time. The horses (which are the owner's livelihood) are usually not released{183} till they are broken down with overwork, and are never paid for. "Government does not pay."

In the case referred to, the English traveller appealed, of course, to the *kaimakam*; and received a courteous apology, and an assurance that the soldiers should be ordered to return the animals. But the sergeant in charge of the party, while admitting that he had received the order, declared that he would see the *kaimakam* hanged before

obeying it; so matters did not seem to be appreciably advanced. On the following morning, however, the traveller's servant turned up, with the horses, and a broad grin.

"Well done, Yukhanan! How did you get them?" said the traveller.

"Why, Rabbi, I found that my enemy Ratu the Kurd was in the town with three mules. So I just said to the soldiers, 'there are much better beasts down there; and no one will mind if you take them, while there's bound to be a row if you take these.'"

So all ended well; though the Englishman, who thought he had carried matters with quite a properly high hand, was humiliated on hearing his servant observe to the universe at large, "Nevertheless, had Rabbi Mr. X. been here, *he* would have thrashed those soldiers as they deserved long before this."[104]

The plain of Gawar is apparently rather a favourite haunt of those whom the Oriental will speak of (very rarely, and nervously) as "the Good People"—the Jann of the "Arabian Nights." One cave in particular, in the hills that border the plain, is notoriously teeming with them; and any man who enters there usually comes out mad, if he ever emerges at all. Once, a few years ago, a party of thirty Kurds undertook its exploration, and went in well armed. They did not penetrate far, however, for presently one of the leaders saw, or thought he saw, *something*;{184} and superstitious panic being one of the most infectious things under the sun, the whole party bolted instantly. Being rather ashamed of themselves when they reached the open air, they impressed an unfortunate Christian to go and see what it was that they had run away from; and when he (not unnaturally) demurred at going alone to investigate that which had just put thirty armed men to flight, they simply gave him the choice between doing that and being shot incontinent.

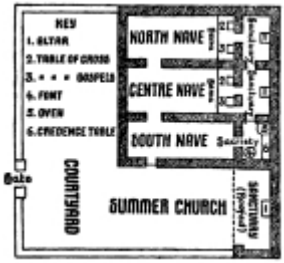
Under this pressure he entered, and vanished for some hours; at the end of which time he crawled out—mad as his predecessors had been. In time, however, he recovered more or less, and told a marvellous tale; though how far the poor fellow really believed it, and how far he was giving his tyrants their money's worth, so to speak, is a problem past our solving.

He told how he had followed the cave till it widened out into a spacious meadow, down the middle of which meandered the stream that flowed from its mouth. On either side of the river stood stately palaces of marble (? stalactite formation), and in front of these, on thrones of gold set with jewels, sat all the kings of the Jann, attended by their houris and their vassals. They summoned the intruder before their *diwan*, and sentenced him to instant death for having violated their privacy: but on his plea of strong compulsion, he was reprieved and released; though awful warnings were uttered against any other profane person who should presume to enter this their sanctuary.

Such is the story told to us by the Patriarch of the Nestorian Church; a gentleman who is sufficiently educated to smile at the superstitions of his fathers—at least during the day, and in European company. And anyone who will take magnesium wire and penetrate into the cavern, will certainly gain much local *kudos*, and may possibly have an interesting experience.

"Will you come with us, your Grace, and see what is really in the cave?" we asked of the Patriarch when he had finished his story.{185}

"I will Rabbi—that is if you will go in first;" replied his Beatitude.[105]



CHURCH OF MAR B'ISHU

Two roads lead from Diza of Gawar (the name Diza is a common one) down to the plain of Urmi; but we took the more difficult and picturesque, leading down the valley of Mar B'Ishu. This is one of the most famous of the shrines of the Nestorian Church, commemorating a hermit round whose cell a monastery subsequently gathered. The monastery has passed away, but a group of three Christian villages fill the valley (a small side gorge just off {186} the main road); and here the church still stands, an unusually elaborate specimen of Nestorian architecture.

Externally it is like all the mountain churches, a mere cube of masonry; though rather larger than usual, for in this case the external dimensions are an approximate square of eighty feet. The building has a stone vault, the flat mud roof of the country being superimposed as an outer covering. It was, however, too great a feat for the mountain builders to throw an arch of eighty feet span, twenty feet being as much as they could compass; and hence the interior of the building is divided into the multitude of separate chapels and vestibules, sacristies and baptisteries, as shown on the plan—a plan which may give some idea of the building, but can make no claim to accuracy.

Windows are almost unknown in the mountain churches, the sanctuary in particular being almost pitch dark at all times; and the door, to avoid risk of desecration,[106] is seldom more than three feet in height. Close by the church

is the cell in the cliff (a small natural cavern) that was the hermitage of Mar B'Ishu, the *Rabban*. And here a freakish water-drip has formed a stalactite which has a rude resemblance to the human figure; and which is accordingly reverenced as a statue of the saint formed by angel's hands.

Considered as a work of art, the statue does not do any great credit to its supernatural artists; but it is a most exceptional thing to find an image of any sort, or of any origin, reverenced by any member of the Nestorian Church. No Evangelical has a greater dislike for anything that savours of "idolatry." Even pictures are rigorously forbidden in their churches; though curtains and the like are employed to as great an extent as their means allow. As an "ornament," only the plain cross (in wood or metal), with no figure upon it, is permitted; and this, lying on a table at the entry of the sanctuary, is kissed by every worshipper as he enters the church. No other sacred symbol is ever introduced.

If the Nestorians, however, are "Protestant" enough{187} in some ways to satisfy the most rigid of English Evangelicals, they have some other customs that would considerably startle those good people; and conspicuous among these is their rite of animal sacrifice. This church of Mar B'Ishu is one of many in the land which are "Lord of Name"; and whither folk bring regularly goats and sheep, and sometimes even oxen, that they may be solemnly sacrificed at the church door.

The rite is practically the same as described in Leviticus, except that there is no burning of any part of the offering. The animal is brought, and its throat cut by the man who brings it; after which the priest takes of the blood and "strikes in on the lintel of the door" of the church. A solemn feast then takes place on the flesh of the sacrifice, the priest having his regular perquisites of hide and shoulder. The custom has the look of an Old Testament

survival; but as a matter of fact, we suspect that it is far older than Moses. We may have here essentially the same sacrifices as those which were old in this land in the days when Abraham went forth from it; and which Moses merely codified in the wilderness some centuries after Abraham had taught them to his sons.

Sacrifice, it must be remembered, is not peculiar to these Nestorians. Yezidis, as already mentioned, practise similar rites. And every Mussulman will do the same at least once in the year; for on the *Korban Bairam* he always sacrifices an animal of some sort, in remembrance of Father Abraham's sacrifice, not of Isaac (as Jews and Christians erroneously say), but of Ishmael.

At first it seems strange, and contrary to the whole tenor of the New Testament, to find Christians still persisting in the sacrifices of the old dispensation. But an Oriental has usually a good reason at the back of his mind for everything that he does; if only the Western can have the patience to find it, and to remember that European lines are not the only ones on which the human intellect can work.

In this case, if you ask him why he sacrifices, he is apt to reply, "Why not? It was the custom of my fathers of old, and can you show me any text that forbids it?{188}"

If you produce texts about "one offering," or any others of the sort, he has still a thrust to deliver that it is hard to parry. "Excuse me, but is not Saint Paul's example as good as Saint Paul's precept,[107] which our fathers do not interpret in the same way as you do. He took the four young men, and saw to it that an offering was made for himself and every one of them. May we not do what Saint Paul did?"

So the sacrifices continue: openly in this out-of-the-way corner of the world; and under the rose in better known parts, like Palestine, more frequently than many people believe. Nothing that ever was well established in the East

has altogether ceased to exist in the hearts of men.

The gorge narrows below Mar B'Ishu, passing the only fresh-water lake in Kurdistan, which was brought into being a few years ago by a great landslip. In the ravine is a curious series of springs charged so heavily with iron that the water looks almost blood colour as it wells out of the rock, and leaves deep crimson stains on the cliffs. Its taste is curiously acrid; and (as might be expected) it is freely used as a tonic, and is very good for the purpose.

Local legend declares that it was by this road that the victorious Persians brought away the True Cross from Jerusalem, when Chosroës, after his capture of that city, sent the relic as a gift to his Christian queen, Shirin; and that healing waters sprang up wherever the bearers put down their sacred load.

The gorge dies out in the curious fold of the hills that is called Mergawar at one point of its length, Tergawar at another, and other names at other places. It is not a true valley, for the rivers run across it and break through its boundary hills by deep gorges; but it forms, on the eastern side of the Hakkiari Mountains, much the same sort of moat as is formed on the southern side by the similar valley of Amadia.

It provides an easy passage practicable in the depth of winter, from Armenia to Kirkuk and Baghdad. And it was probably for this reason that the Ottoman Government so coveted the possession of this district; for it afforded{189} them the means of moving the Baghdad army corps to the Russian frontier, without making the long detour to the west that would otherwise be necessitated by the mountains of Kurdistan.

Tergawar has always been a land of war, even when it was not a debatable land between Turkey and Persia. Here are several villages of Nestorians—as ever a good fighting stock; and these being tolerably well armed are chronically

at feud with their Kurdish neighbours, a small broken clan recognizing no one head, and known as the "Begzadi." The principal Christian chief, a man of the name of Bajan, had a reputation as a warrior even among those who were men of war from their youth. His absolute fearlessness had brought him triumph repeatedly against the longest odds, and his enemies even esteemed him invulnerable. One day, in the heat of a fight, he forced his way single-handed into a house where five Kurds had gathered; and they surrendered to him in a body. When their friends chaffed them afterwards, saying, "Bajan is a good fighter, no doubt; but still he was but one, and you were five"; they simply replied, "Well, what could we do? We fired at him, and the bullets flattened on his coat."

Even to this day old men who have served under John Jacob in India will say that they have seen him shake the bullets out of his tunic after a skirmish.

Tough old Bajan is dead now, we regret to say; but dead in a way befitting. He went to help a Kurdish friend in battle, just from sheer love of a fight; and a bullet that took him behind the ear and came out at his forehead was too much even for his invulnerability.

The Christians of the Tergawar villages (Marwana, Kurana, Balulan, and others) were good fighters, as has been said, but fairly good average Christians withal; though one owns sorrowfully that fiery old Bajan was "not so good a Christian as so good a knight should be." They were undeniably rowdy and turbulent, however; quarrelling among themselves almost as much as they did with the Kurds! Grazing rights and boundaries were usually the *casus belli*; a fruitful cause of bad blood, whether among{190} the Dandie Dinmonts of Liddesdale or the borderers of Persia and Turkey.

As Christians, they have, of course, their clergy; but these are peasants like themselves, living as they do, and hardly better taught. The *qashi* or priests may indeed be

able to read the services, and it is not the thing for them to take part actually in the tribal battles. But this disability does not apply to the deacons (*shamashi*), who in the Nestorian Church form a regular grade in the ministry, with regular duties of their own, and are not merely candidates for the priesthood. These may go out to fight if the case requires it; and more than one reverend deacon among them leads the fighting as efficiently as he leads the prayers.

One prominent Kurdish Agha, a certain Bedr Khan Beg, takes out his Christian village to battle, as readily as his Kurdish one: and the village deacon is his second in command.

This Bedr Khan Beg is no relation whatever to his famous (or infamous) namesake of Bohtan, of whom we make mention elsewhere. He is a chief of the Begzadi Kurds whose prowess and activity have won him much local reputation, but who can boast no such formidable following as the Sheikhs of Neri or Barzan. For ourselves, we feel bound to speak well of him; for did he not once offer, out of pure goodwill, to make proclamation in the district that if we or any of our servants had to complain of any molestation, "I, Bedr Khan Beg, will hang at least two Kurds every time!" It is true that we scrupled to lay ourselves under such an obligation to him; but Bedr Khan Beg (like General Robert Craufurd) had a reputation of being uncommonly likely to carry out his threats.

He adopted a similar expedient with conspicuous success a little later. Some citizen of Urmi owed him money, and refused to discharge his just debt. Accordingly he published his intention of killing one *Seyyid* a month until such time as he received payment. Urmi *Seyyids* are mostly *Shiahs*, whereas Bedr Khan Beg is a *Sunni*; though it may be doubted whether this was a point to which he attached much weight.{191}

The unfortunate *Seyyids*, of course, had no concern in

the debt whatever; but they are the most influential caste in Urmi. And now, to save their own skins, they began to apply pressure to the debtor: which was exactly what Bedr Khan Beg had calculated upon all along![108]

Of the two bishops who control the church in this land, one (now dead) was a feeble old man, noted only for possessing in his house the fiercest fleas in all Mergawar. The other, however, is of a different stamp. Not that one counts him as precisely an ideal Prelate, seeing that he occasionally has to stop to spell a word in the service, and would be put to it to write his own name. However, in Kurdistan you are not in the twentieth century, but in the fourteenth—or perhaps the dark ages outright—and in those times Mar Dinkha of Tergawar might readily be paralleled in England. There was a Bishop Beaumont of Durham who made five or six shots at the word *episcopalis* in the reading of a formal document; and finally swore a round oath—said *soit pour dit*—and went on. Now we have often heard Mar Dinkha stumble, but we have never heard him swear!

There are better precedents for his lack of learning, too, than mediæval England can furnish. The "Apostolical Constitutions" (a fourth century composition) distinctly contemplate the existence of illiterate bishops as a very possible phenomenon. "If the bishop cannot write, he should be at least possessed of native shrewdness," says the author of the compilation. Is not the age of Nicaea a good time for precedents, O purist in matters ecclesiastical? Mar Dinkha would pass the test proposed there; and his discipline, if of the roughest, is perhaps for that reason the better suited for his flock. Once he came to his friends of the Archbishop's Mission with a request for a new pastoral staff. The old one (a stout stick of oak) had "become broken" over the back of a village *qasha* (rector) whom he found ploughing on Sunday!{192}

In the year 1903 the chronic trouble among these

disorderly elements blazed up in a notable conflagration. Grazing quarrels started it, as usual; but it must be owned that the hotheads among the Christians did their best to aggravate matters. They had a trick of ridiculing the differences between *Shiah* and *Sunni* among the Mussulmans, by labelling one dog "Ali" and another "Mohammed," dressing them up as soldier and *mollah*, and then setting them to fight; and this might well have angered more peaceable people than their Begzadi neighbours. It was not surprising that a confederacy was formed to attack the guilty village of Mawana, which was then at open feud with its Christian ally of Balulan, and so appeared an easy prey.

If the men of Mawana had gone out of their way to provoke the quarrel, at least they fought it out stoutly. Finding how formidable was the confederacy against them, they gathered together—some fifty fighters in all—and went up in a body to the church of the village. There each and all kissed the cross, as a solemn committal of their cause to God, and then commenced the fighting. Though outnumbered seven to one they beat back four assaults in the course of seven days. "And in that time," as they told proudly after, "not any of the houses of our village were burnt, save one; and that belonged to a man of the Protestants, who had refused to come and kiss the cross with the rest of us." Still, as their cartridges ran low, the matter began to look ugly; for if the Kurds should ever be able to close, numbers must tell their tale.

On the seventh night of the siege help came unexpectedly. Over the hill lay the other Christian village of Balulan, just then at open feud with Mawana, and so without immediate concern in this quarrel. Still, as they heard of the siege, they began to grow more and more restive. Ablahad, the village deacon, at last gathered all the men together, told them that now they must forget the feud, and called for volunteers to go down with him and

help their brethren. Soon he had as many as he wanted, a picked band, with all the cartridges they could carry. Old Bajan could not give them leave to go, but he carefully and ostentatiously looked{193} the other way; and the little party stole out that night to put their lives in hazard for their enemies.

The deacon knew his ground; and (strictly enjoining his men to hold their fire) he led them straight down upon one of the strongest Kurdish pickets. There was a challenge—and no reply. The sentry fired—and the startled picket sprang to their feet. It was the chance for which Ablahad was waiting! One shattering volley at close quarters disabled eight and twenty of the enemy. The Christians were through the leaguer, and entered Mawana without losing a man, and with their supply of cartridges intact.

Nor was this all their success; for so badly were the besiegers' nerves shaken that (thinking the relieving force to be far larger than it really was) they raised the siege that night, and departed to their homes. "And when men arose in the morning and looked out, thanks be to God, the enemy had departed."

Gallant *shamasha* Ablahad did not live long after his brilliant success. About a fortnight later he, with a party of Mawana men, was caught in a little isolated village by overwhelming numbers of Kurds. The Kurds, to their credit be it said (though fully aware of his recent exploit), offered him leave to depart in safety and honour as soon as they learned of his presence among their foes. Bedr Khan Beg himself, the leader of their party, came forward in person to bring the message before the firing began.

"We have no quarrel with you, *shamasha*; nor with Bajan your Lord. And we seek for none. Do you go your way," he cried. "But for these men of Mawana there is blood between us and them and we must settle it here."

"I thank you for your offer," replied the deacon firmly.

"But I am here with my friends, and I will see it out with them."

The fight was desperate; but it could have but one ending. The houses were fired; and though the defenders cut their way through the walls from room to room hoping to escape under cover of the smoke, they had finally to choose between suffocation and coming out into the open. And there the little band were shot down to the last man. {194}

And so died Ablahad the deacon, surely by as good a death as a man need wish to die.

Bedr Khan Beg reported the facts himself to the English in Urmi; pointing out that really under the circumstances he could do no otherwise than stand by the faith of Islam in the fight; "but you will understand that my heart is the same as ever, and there is no breach of friendship between me and you."

Picturesque and grand as the fighting days were, they came to an end shortly after this episode. In 1906 the Persian Government determined to make an effort to reduce the Kurds to order; and some sort of force was sent up to the mountains for the purpose, the Christians being called on to assist the Persian Government in the work. Unfortunately the Turkish authority took this opportunity to intervene, and to secure (as they hoped) a border province which they coveted. A small Turkish force was sent for the purpose, probably in response to some appeal of the Kurds for help; and at its appearance the Persian army fled to Urmi in the most absurd panic. As for their allies, the Assyrians of the Tergawar villages, whom they had called to arms on their side (and who alone had behaved decently on that day of shame), nobody gave a second thought to them. So the villages they had defended so long and so gallantly were plundered by the Kurds at last, the Turks making no effort to prevent so ordinary an incident of war. After the Persian army had fled, it was the

men of the villages who, under their own leaders and against heavy odds, covered the retreat of their women and children.

For some time the Tergawar men were refugees in Urmi plain; and some of them were accommodated there in villages built by local notables, who were glad of the opportunity of securing that valuable economic factor, a good head of labour for their estates. When the Ottoman occupation of the border province seemed to be assured, many of them ventured back to their homes, and reoccupied some at least of their villages. But with the evacuation of the disputed territory by the Ottomans, as a consequence of the need of all possible troops in the Balkans, the face of events was altered once{195} again. However, in the interval, Urmi had become to all intents and purposes Russian territory; and if the province is nominally Persian, it is practically under Russian rule. The rule of the Muscovite may not be all that one would wish, but at least he is not likely to sanction open war between the tribes; and if only order is guaranteed, the Christians may hope to be able to live in the future more tranquilly, if less picturesquely, than they have done in the past.{196}

CHAPTER X

TWIGS OF A WITHERED EMPIRE

(URMI)

ON their eastern side the Hakkiari Mountains subside into the plain of Urmi, and the journey down to that town from Tergawar is quite a tame affair after such wild experiences as are furnished by Jilu and Baz. We have merely to cross the last two down-like ridges of mountain, and then the country changes, with the startling suddenness induced by

irrigation, to a fertile crop-covered plain, plentifully chequered with trees.

Ten years ago Urmi town was but an overgrown village, crowded with mean houses of sun-dried mud brick, and girdled with crumbling mud walls. Only occasionally did a gateway of burnt brick, with some pretensions to architecture, usher one into the courtyard of some notable; into a garden constructed exactly on the lines depicted in the Assyrian sculptures, and a house in a state of more or less disrepair. Within the walls the city remains thus to this day; though recent changes have promoted the growth of a suburb with an air of "underdone Tiflis," where Persians have produced a bad imitation of the Russian imitation of European style.

By far its most picturesque feature (not excepting even the mosque courtyards) is its great Bazaar. This is a good specimen of the usual Persian type, which is far more ambitious than the Turkish. It is a maze of ill-lit corridors, roofed with domical brick vaults, and lined on either side with the booths of the merchants and artificers. It will be long ere a visitor's eyesight can accustom itself to the darkness, and longer still ere his "bump of locality" can{197} master the intricate windings of the passages. He will enter in to explore them joyfully, for they are a perfect feast of Oriental *genre* subjects depicted in the richest of subdued harmonious colouring; but if he wishes to emerge again, he had better charter a guide!

The alleys are lit only by small holes pierced in the crowns of the vaulting; and so solid seem the beams of light that fall athwart the dustladen gloom, that the passenger instinctively checks his pace before he ventures to breast them.

The townsfolk are mostly Persians; and the typical costume of the lower classes consists of rather loose trousers, with a wide-skirted tunic coming down as low as the knee and girt at the waist with a sash. Over this they

usually wear a sleeveless jacket of brown frieze, and the cap is of light brown felt, shaped like half a gourd. It is practically the same dress that we see represented as Persian on the old Greek sculptures. Richer men wear a full-skirted coat of dark blue, with a cap of black astrachan.

The working women wear much the same costume as the men, except that the tunic is rather longer, and the trousers rather tighter. Also, the colour of their garments is usually dull red, while that of the men is blue or grey; and they muffle the upper part of the body in a voluminous wrapper of indigo blue. The country women, when they have finished their marketing, are accustomed to discard their trousers directly they get outside the city gate. They then pack their purchases in the legs, and march off with them on their necks like a yoke, quite unconscious of the least impropriety!

Urmi plain is a proverb for richness in Persia, and its cultivators (Christian for the most part) have an hereditary skill in their art. They grow some seven and twenty varieties of grape, and the export of raisins to Russia is a very large one. The grapes when gathered are dipped in a strong solution of lye to keep off wasps, and so exposed to dry for a fortnight on earthen floors sloping to the sun. Few things in the country are more striking than the mass of purple and golden grapes on such a floor, resembling, but far{198} surpassing in richness, one of the famous carpets of the land.

The Persian summer is reliable, or such a method would be impossible; for anything like a sprinkle of rain during the drying time is ruin for the crop of the year.

The frontier line between Persia and Turkey may be uncertain, but at least the customs go on; and we found the authorities in that department waiting for us where we entered the plain. Our managing servant, however, is a master of strategy in these matters; and all the loads

chanced to be lagging some distance behind, save one that carried the indispensable food-box. This was removed at the order of the Government, and opened; on which the first things to appear were the tea apparatus and the medicine chest. The sight of this last reminded the official that he had fever lately; "Could the Englishman spare him a little quinine?" Of course we could; and perhaps (as our servant suggested) he might like some tea also;[109] the English sahib was sure to want some while waiting for the loads to come up. There was a stream handy, and the invaluable "primus" stove in the box; so that the customs officer and the writer were amicably having tea together under a tree when the mules arrived.

"Shall I take down the boxes?" said the wily Dinkha, smoothly.

"*Wallah Effendim*, this English sahib is not a merchant! Pass upon your way, and may Allah go with you."

And so, the customs barrier was passed; for politeness seldom fails in the East.

On occasions, of course, things do not go so well. We remember the despair of an unfortunate American bride who had come out fresh to the country, with her husband, as missionaries. A dinner-set of rather good china (a wedding present) had preceded her by some weeks, and was waiting for her in her new home, where she eagerly unpacked it.{199}

It had been sent out to Trebizond, properly packed in hay and straw; but the officials there, being suspicious for some reason, had searched it to the very bottom—though of course without finding anything contraband. Then, to save themselves trouble, they had just stuffed the goods into the case again, without the hay packing; and as there was naturally some room to spare at the end, had thrown in some saucepans, flat-irons, and the iron weights of a lever weighing-machine, and so sent the whole on a three

weeks' journey across country. Its condition at the end of that experience may be imagined. We believe that one plate had survived; and it now adorns, in the character of a monument, the lady's drawing-room wall!

Urmi city and plain was the Mecca of one of the noblest of the religious faiths and philosophies that man has evolved for himself; for it was the birthplace of Zoroaster, and was for centuries a stronghold of the fire-worshippers' cult. Their most sacred shrine, Sirsh (now Takht-i-Sulieman), is a little to the south; and ruins of the greatest of the fire temples still stand there, beside the weird crater-lake of Zindan. Not a Zoroastrian, however (as far as we know), is found in this district now; though a few still cluster round the Towers of Silence at Resht, and there is, of course, an important community of them in Bombay. Even there, however, their numbers are disproportionate to their influence, and even those small numbers are diminishing.

Once Urmi plain was their principal Holy Place; and even now, every village of importance stands on or near one of the great ash heaps (often covering acres of ground) that mark the sites where the sacred fires were kept perpetually burning. These memorials have fallen on very evil days lately; for the present owners of the land have found that good wood ash is one of the best of manures for their fields, and the heaps are steadily diminishing in consequence. Strange relics are uncovered in them at times, and are sold to the foreigner as *antikas*; though usually it is impossible to be certain where, or under what circumstances, they were found, and they lose much of their historical value in consequence. One such discovery{200} suggested grim rites at one period, as a part of the Zoroastrian ritual; for several skulls were unearthed, the owners of which had been killed by copper nails hammered into the brains, and still resting embedded in the bone.

Zoroaster was a reformer rather than a founder of a religion; and the sites that became fire-temples after his date (the seventh century before Christ) were probably shrines of some kind of worship for ages before that period. Thus the explorer can still find near them (and often buried under their advancing flanks as they grew in size) the tombs of chiefs of the Bronze Age, with spear-heads and sword-blades of that metal, and finely worked golden ornaments of a distinctive shell-like pattern. These were the tribes, one may suppose, that the Assyrians encountered, when (somewhere about 1000 B.C.) they tried to extend their empire into this fertile country, and fought a battle on the waters of the lake of which a picture still remains among their carvings. Their warriors were supported on inflated sheep-skins; a precaution that seems hardly necessary in such water, for Lake Urmi is a good second in the matter of buoyancy to the Dead Sea itself.

The lake is of a good size, perhaps forty miles by eighty, though at no place is it more than about thirty feet in depth. Its saltness is remarkable, for the bather sits in deep water much as in an armchair, with his head and shoulders emerging. Swimming is difficult, for the legs are so apt to kick clean out above the surface; and on landing, any scratch or cut on the person makes its presence very noticeable. The rash British Consul who once took a header in, as he was accustomed to do in ordinary salt water, is not likely soon to forget his experience.

It is, of course, a “dead sea,” for there is absolutely nothing living in it save a variety of shrimp of low organization. All fish carried down into it by the rivers die at once. Still it is an exhilarating place for a swim, provided that a bucket of fresh water is available for a wash down before attempting to dry. There are rocky promontories on the shore at intervals, but, as a rule, the water is very shallow near the bank; a fact borne impressively into the consciousness{201} of a member of the

Royal Geographical Society who was making investigations in this land. His boat grounded hopelessly three-quarters of a mile from shore, and he had to wade that distance in waist-deep water with a muddy bottom; while every time he lifted a foot, a large bubble of sulphuretted hydrogen rose to the surface, and burst under his nose!

St. Thomas the Apostle once crossed the lake—on his way to India as local tradition has it—but in a fashion less laborious and odoriferous than did the scientist. He walked on the water's surface; a smaller miracle in this case than some parallels in the lives of the saints, yet no small portent all the same. In memory of it all Urmi comes down for a solemn and ceremonial bathe in the waters on the anniversary of the passage, the fifteenth day of August. Other folk have to cross in boats, usually the very clumsiest craft that swim on any sheet of water in the world, with masts built after the style of an old-fashioned bear's pole. With a strong wind dead astern, they move perhaps two miles an hour, and may get over in a day and a night. In any other case the sail is hauled down, and they wait for better times; so that the voyage of forty miles may last for a week or even more. Latterly, enterprise has risen to a steamer, plying between the ports of Urmi and Tabriz, and passing through the winding channel that divides the two principal islands of the lake, "Sheep Island" and "Donkey Island." With luck, this craft may manage the passage (on the rare occasions when the engine does not break down and have to be repaired *en route*) in six hours. The regular programme, however, is a doleful remark from the engine-room "*Machina qizdi*," "The machine has lost its temper"; and a halt that may last some hours, or may endure for a day. As for the islands, they are uninhabited by man. How the second got its name we know not; but "Sheep Island" has some herds of wild sheep, which have been long enough isolated to develop some characteristic

peculiarities in their very fine horns.

Urmi is one of the most ancient centres of Christianity in the land; for if local tradition is to be trusted, the Faith{202} was brought here by no less a person than one of the "Wise Men," who came from the East to the manger at Bethlehem. Oriental story, naturally, has nothing to say to their traditional migration to the city of Cologne; though it does include the three traditional names, Gaspar, Melchior and Balthasar, as those of three of the band of twelve "Magi" who journeyed together to Palestine, looking for the fulfilment of the prophecy of that ancient initiate of their religion, Balaam the son of Beor. As for the identity of the Magian who came back to his home at Urmi, and brought the "Good News" with him; do not his revered bones rest to this day in the church of St. Mary in the city, and is not that proof enough? Like many another Oriental legend, it is at least more ancient, and less improbable, than is the story of the "Three Kings" of the city on the Rhine.

Many beautiful traditions or parables gather round the visit of the Magi in the East, as in the West; and one of them may be recounted here. "Our fathers say" that when Adam went forth from the garden, he took with him two things as memorials of his lost Paradise. These were some of the spices that grew upon the Tree of Knowledge, and one branch gathered from the Tree of Life. They were preserved by his descendants in the East, as tokens that the lost inheritance would be given back again some day; and when at last the Wise Men knew that He had come, who was to restore it, and went forth to do Him homage, those spices were the frankincense that they offered at Bethlehem. The branch of the Tree of Life they took with them also, and left in Jerusalem; and there those who knew not what they did, took it, and used it for the cross-beam of the Tree on Calvary.

Originally the church in Urmi, like that in the

mountains, was of that "East Syrian" communion which its enemies called Nestorian. It is very certain, however, that the body did not teach what Nestorius of Constantinople was condemned for teaching, in the year 431; and indeed it is very doubtful whether either he or anybody else ever did so.{203}

It has since become the prey of foreign missions of various complexions, such as Russian Orthodox, French Roman Catholic, and American Presbyterian; each of which has been anxious to win the body over to what they are convinced is a much better form of Christianity, and could not conscientiously be content to leave it in its old independence, while recalling it to its own ancient rule. All three have achieved a good deal of success, and the "Old Church" is now a small minority; but to a member of the Church of England it appears doubtful whether the success was worth winning. Do you improve the Oriental Christian by taking him out of the Church of his fathers and inducing him to join any other body? He has his faults in the Old Church, and plenty of them; and there is an element of truth in the accusation so often thrown at him, that he is an invertebrate, backboneless creature—Christian, only because his fathers were Christian before him. There is no doubt that his religion is an external armour of inherited habit and belief; and that he is, so to speak, crustaceous rather than vertebrate in his spiritual construction. We will assume it as certain that all those who make this fact a reproach to him would themselves have become Christians, had they been born heathens or Mussulmans. Still, if a zealous reformer extracts the lobster from his shell (a feat which can be performed, if you disregard the lobster's feelings), even that drastic operation does not enable him to develop a backbone. He merely develops a fresh armour of habit, that may or may not be superior to the old. Further, invertebrate though the Oriental Christian may be (and, therefore, of course, of a far lower type than

the vertebrate European Protestant), he has the peculiar powers of his species; and can endure an amount of cutting and hacking, without losing his faith, which would altogether destroy the spiritual life of a higher type of Christian. The gift of passive endurance may appear small to those who have it not; but at least it can claim Gospel approval.

Even those who do not sympathize with "Mission Effort" usually admit readily that it has called out a wonderful devotion in those who give themselves to it, no matter what{204} the particular form of their Christianity may be. It is true, however, in this as in other things, that "*corruptio optimi, pessima*"; and there is in Urmi and its neighbourhood a good deal of mission work gone bad.

The various European missions (the word includes American in this case) are above reproach; none of their members taking more than a sufficient maintenance. But there are various small missions (usually managed entirely by natives but financed from Europe) which simply exist to provide a comfortable living for the native "pastor" who manages them. These profess usually to evangelize the Mussulmans, but as a matter of fact simply gather small congregations of men already Christian from among the relations of the "Missionary."

It would be very much better if the good people who support these would put their work under the superintendence of some one of the larger missions in the place; and not install the Oriental in a position where opportunities for fraud are so easy that even a European might easily succumb to them.

As for mission work among Moslems, there is practically none, in this province at any rate. Nothing but philanthropic and educational efforts are possible at present, so long as the *sheriat* or "sacred law" is recognized by every Moslem as immeasurably superior to any civil enactments, and death consequently remains the

legal penalty for every apostate from Islam.[110] How can the European missionary (himself necessarily protected) expect success, when he has to call his converts to face daily peril of death which his own European status forbids him to share?

There is another point to be remembered. There is no doubt that Christianity if preached as the Asiatic faith which it really is, and not as the European religion which we have (inevitably and properly) made it for ourselves, can do much for the Islamic races. It is equally certain that those Islamic races can do much for Christianity.{205} But, with all their reverence for Seyidna Isa (our Lord Jesus) Mussulmans will never accept Him, even as a superior prophet to their Hazrat-i-Mohammed, till they learn to respect the native Christians whom they see among them. So it would seem that all mission work must necessarily apply itself first to the uplifting of the native Christians, and leave the conversion of Islam to the future. Islam meanwhile has to face a great problem of its own; viz. will faith in their Prophet's teaching survive the impact of modern science, coupled with the political subjugation of the last great Moslem Powers? If not, what will take its place? For who dare contemplate such a phenomenon as a religionless East?

Urmi considers itself a civilized and educated town, and all its prominent citizens wear the most correct of *alafranga* clothes. Even the mysteries of the right relation of collar and tie have been mastered now, perplexing though the problem is. But behind all this aping of modernity one rejoices unfeignedly (if perhaps unrighteously) to find a good deal of primitive paganism. That oldest faith of the land, the aboriginal tree-worship, still lingers in the villages; and indeed is only despised by the townsfolk when the foreigner is within hearing. Does not the Sacred Tree of the village of Kerdami—a noble ilex of most unusual size—still command more than

reverence? A rag from the garments of any sufferer from any disease has only to be tied on to one of its branches to secure relief infallibly. Once only has any man been known to treat it with any disrespect, when a profane villager of Protestant sympathies dared to abstract a fallen bough that was still sound enough to make a bridge for a wide irrigation cut in his field. Soon, however, he had reason to repent his temerity; for first the roof of his outhouse fell, and then his buffalo died; then his wife died, and finally his son fell ill. In terror at the series of calamities, he restored the bough and made a propitiatory offering at one of the neighbouring churches; on which the lad recovered. And none has dared to speak against the tree since!

Churches at which offerings are made are numerous in the{206} neighbourhood, and one of these, Mar Sergius,[111] is particularly famous in the land. This saint protects travellers provided that they offer a black lamb to him before setting out; but his special *métier* is the curing of the "possessed," or *shidâni*—a name used both of lunatics and epilepts. The treatment in this case is that, after solemn prayer and benediction, the patient is consigned to a certain cell in the foundations of the church, which was once no doubt the abode of an ascetic. It is of "beehive" structure, and a regular "little ease" in pattern; for the inmate can neither sit, stand, nor lie in any comfort. There the sick person remains for a full night, or sometimes for twenty-four hours; and the fact is at all events past question, that a very fair proportion of those who submit to the discipline come out cured. It is of course a case of faith-healing, natural enough in people who have never been taught the modern heresy that the age of "miracles" is past; though we own that profane Europeans have suggested that as a solitary night in that vermin-swarming den might well drive a sane man mad, it is therefore conceivable that it might drive a mad person sane!

Inscriptions in the church, by the way, indicate that under certain circumstances it is allowable to sleep in the *bait shidâni* by proxy. We have read there the statement that "I, John, the son of Jacob, have slept here in the cell, on behalf of my sister Khua, who was unable to come. Grant, O Lord Almighty, that by the power of the prayers of Thy servant Mar Sergius, it may be profitable to her." Mussulmans are as ready to avail themselves of the curative powers of the shrine as are Christians; and we have known a party of Heriki make liberal offerings to the church, and attend a Christian service in the same, to testify their gratitude for the recovery of an epileptic girl.

Many Mussulmans seem to hold that Christianity, whether{207} of an ancient or modern type, has marvellous power against disease; and their belief received what they regarded as a signal confirmation when the cholera visited Urmi in 1905. Mussulmans took, of course, no precautions against it; for how could merely boiling the water frustrate the Will of Allah? The marvel is that the whole of their quarters of the town were not depopulated, when one considers the conditions under which they live. It was not unusual, for instance, to see dead bodies washed before burial in the conduit of drinking water! One can only assume a relative immunity, acquired originally, but transmitted by inheritance, to this and similar filth diseases; and the point may be worth study, as throwing light on the question whether acquired characteristics can pass by inheritance.

Christians, as a general rule, took the precautions that the European missionaries advised: with the result that while four thousand Mussulmans died in the city alone (the numbers in the villages were unknown), only five individual Christians perished; and one of these was a Christian scientist who refused to boil his water. Mussulmans held that Azrael was showing undue partiality to infidels, and many of them even put the Cross over their

doors to deceive him! One would like to investigate the state of mind that dictated that act! Fancy trying to fool the Angel of Death!

There was, of course, a good deal of panic, and every stomach-ache was put down as cholera at first. One man even declared that he had seen the fatal microbes following the American doctor about, "like little dogs"; but the general belief was that he had been indulging in strong prophylactics!

Almost all the Mussulmans in Urmi itself, and the plain around it, are of the *Shiah* persuasion, as good Persians should be. In consequence the celebrations of Mohurram are particularly striking. Long processions of mourners parade through the streets, beating their breasts, and mourning for the martyrs Hassan and Hosein; while occasional bands of devotees rush by in white garments striking at their shaven heads with the heavy "Mohurram knives" (which are really short broadswords of old Roman pattern),{208} till the blood gushes out upon them. As the heads are shaven it is true that a light blow will draw blood, and that therefore the ceremony can be made a matter of display and little more. As a fact, however, there is no sham about it, for the feast scarcely ever passes without one man at any rate actually dying from his self-inflicted wounds; at least this was certainly the case before the Russian occupation.

Practically Urmi is a Russian town now; and every good *Shiah* must feel that Mohurram, with infidel bayonets to keep the streets clean and orderly, has been robbed of its soul if not of its outward pomp. The processions still take place of course, and are even more magnificent with increasing wealth; but "Ichabod"—where is the old glory? The occupation crept in gradually, and came unperceived; but it is there, and will continue. First came the purely religious mission, for the protection and education of those Christians who wished to become members of the

Orthodox Church. Then a Consul had to be sent, to protect the resident Russian priests and monks. Next, to avert any possible peril for the Consul, there must be an escort of Cossacks for him; and when the Persian Government is manifestly so feeble that the road cannot be kept open even for the Royal Mail, what can Consul and Consul-General do but patrol the roads for the public good? And then behold the occupation as complete and permanent as that of the English in Egypt. In both cases, the result looks as if there had been a deep-laid and unscrupulous plan all along. In both cases there has been no such thing; but circumstances have pushed the men on the spot into action; and authority at home (with more or less of unwillingness) has had to acquiesce. Neither Power has been able to avoid the feeling, "*mea res agitur, paries cum proximus ardet*." It is all for the best for those most concerned, for now there is safety, comfort, wealth, and an even law for all; but all the same one's memory turns lovingly to the picturesque, dirty, disreputable days of a few years ago!

In those days, a real *Seyyid* (or even a sham one) had the rights that a Descendant of the Prophet ought to have.{209}



THE CITADEL ROCK, VAN.

No. 9

He lived at free quarters where he chose (on Christian villagers mostly) and paraded the streets in a flowing purple robe with a green turban, which indicated by its folds and pattern whether the wearer was descended from the Prophet by the male or female line.

He was hated by all creeds maybe, but he was feared by all notwithstanding; by Moslems for his supposed spiritual rank, by Christians for his undoubted worldly power. Woe to the Christian dog who presumed to shirk getting off his horse and standing at the salute when the *Seyyid* rode by; it was an unmerited favour that he should be allowed to ride a horse at all!

Of course, there are gibes against the clan in plenty: for the more grossly superstitious a man is, the more impossible he finds it to keep his tongue off the Church which nevertheless he dares not disobey. When all else is bound, it is hard if speech is not free!

Thus we are told how Khoja Nazr-ed-din was sent out by his wife one day to buy egg-plants for dinner.

“Don’t know what they are like,” said the Khoja.

"Mudhead," said his wife, "there are lots in the market —fat purple things with green heads."

"Oh, I know then," said the khoja; and he came back with a *Seyyid* in full robes.

"Here's the egg-plant, wife. What shall I do with it?" he demanded.

"Rip it open and cut off its head," came the voice from the kitchen, "and then put it in the pot."

The khoja, obedient man, did his best to follow instructions, and a very dishevelled *Seyyid* succeeded in escaping into the street.

Khoja[112] Nazr-ed-din is a sort of Oriental Joe Miller, upon whom any story can be fathered, from Stamboul to Kandahar. But how completely the "Arabian Nights" atmosphere survives in Urmi to this day may be judged from the following story, which was told to us as a true one,{210} and which the narrator at any rate believed implicitly. Let us call it,

The Story of Haji Kas, and how his own Son bought him

There lived of late in the city of Urmi a *Seyyid* of the *Seyyids*, whose name was Haji Kas. And he was a rich man and a powerful, who had thrice performed the Pilgrimage to Mecca; and who was a friend to the governor and the kadi, and had in repute among the mollahs and imaums.

Now it is said by the Poet (upon whom be peace), "if thy neighbour hath made the Pilgrimage once, beware of him; if twice remove into the next street." And Haji Kas had three times made the Pilgrimage. Wherefore all men feared him greatly, for he regarded neither God nor man.

Now there was a certain householder in the city who had a garden which Haji Kas coveted; and forasmuch as he would not sell, Haji Kas reviled him and persecuted him, and brought false accusation against him before the kadi in

the courts of law. So that householder went to his house sorrowful and sore vexed; and sat him down in an inner chamber, and ate not, and covered his face.

Howbeit that householder had a wife, and she was a fair woman and a wise; and when she saw her husband sorrowing, she said unto him, "What aileth thee, O my lord, that thou eatest nothing and art sad?" And he answered, "Because of Haji Kas the *Seyyid*; for he seeketh to take from me my garden, and hath brought false accusation against me; and moreover the kadi hath eaten bribes at his hand." And the woman laughed, and said, "Truly, thou doest ill to fret thyself for such a matter. Leave Haji Kas to me. I will give thee vengeance on Haji Kas."

So the woman arose in the morning, and donned her fairest raiment, and perfumed herself with musk, and painted her eyes with kohl; and she took her veil, and went forth, and came to the street where Haji Kas dwelt. And as the *Seyyid* passed by, she drew aside her veil and ogled him, and said, "O Moslem, canst thou tell me the dwelling-place of Haji Kas?" And Haji Kas answered, "I am he. What wouldst thou with me?" And she drew aside her veil{211} further, and smiled, and said, "Thy servant is a woman of Teheran,[113] and married to a man of Urmi. And my husband hath gone on a journey, and hath sent me a writing of divorcement. And behold my neighbours said unto me, 'Seek not advice of any in this matter, save only of the upright Haji Kas.'"

(The narrator dwelt on the flirtation lovingly, and at great length, but here we are obliged to curtail it.)

Then Haji Kas lighted down from his horse, and took her by the hand and said, "O my lady of beauty, verily in this matter thy neighbours counselled thee well." But the woman drew away from him, and veiled herself, and answered, "It is not meet that we talk together in the street at this time. Come to my house at sundown, and I will give

thee welcome; and there shalt thou instruct me in all that it behoves me to do."

So Haji Kas arose after nightfall, and went secretly to the house that the woman had appointed to him; and she opened to him, and set meat and drink before him; and while they made merry together, behold, there was a knocking at the door. And the woman went softly to hearken; and she said, "It is my husband. Lo! he is returned from his journey, and I wist not aught of his coming; and I fear that he will do us a mischief, if he find us together in the house."

Then said Haji Kas, "I conjure thee, O my lady, that thou show me a way of escape." But she answered, "There is no other door. Hide thee in this great chest; I only have the key thereof, and when my husband is departed then straightway I will set thee free."

So Haji Kas entered the chest, and the woman turned the key upon him. And she opened the door to her husband, and said, "A greeting to thee! Behold, I have taken Haji Kas in the snare that I have laid." And the man said, "Where is he?" And she answered, "He is in that chest.{212} Cord it tightly, and we will eat and be merry, and thereafter we will take counsel what we shall do with Haji Kas."

And when the morning morrowed, the man arose, and said, "What shall we now do with Haji Kas? Come let us open the chest, and I will beat him and let him go." But the woman said, "Not so. Call thou hither a porter, and lay the chest upon his shoulders, and bid him bear it to the bazaar; and let Achmet the salesman cry it for sale to the highest bidder; but charge him to sell it unopened; no man shall know what is in it, until that it is sold." Then the man did as the woman had bidden him, and the porter departed to the bazaar.

And as he was going down he met a water-seller; and

the water-seller said, "A greeting to thee. Whither goest thou?" And he answered, "I bear this chest to the bazaar." Then said the water-seller, "What is in it?" And the porter said, "Nay that I know not, for no man may know what is in it till it is sold."

Then the water-seller went near and hearkened; and he said, "There is some living thing within it. Beware lest it be a jinn. Peradventure it will do thee hurt." And the porter dropped the chest, and sprang away from it, and cried, "I take refuge with Allah from Satan the stoned."

Then the water-seller answered, "See now this pool of water. It is my counsel that thou sink the chest awhile therein."

Now when Haji Kas heard that saying he cried aloud out of the chest, saying "See thou do it not, for I am the *Seyyid*, Haji Kas." And the porter answered, "Nay, but this is a cunning jinn." And Haji Kas cried, "By Allah, I am indeed the *Seyyid*, and if thou let me go I will give thee a great reward."

But the porter said, "Not so; for I have been paid my hire and my charge is laid upon me. If then I deliver not the chest to Achmet, who will henceforth employ me in the bazaar?"

Then Haji Kas spake to the water-seller saying, "I pray thee then, friend, that thou will hie thee to the house of my son; and bid him haste to the bazaar, and buy the chest of{213} Achmet, how great soever may be the price thereof. And let him bear it away unopened, that I be not discovered therein."

So the water-seller ran to bear the message, and the porter took the chest and bore it to the bazaar.

And Achmet the salesman took the chest and set it on the bench before him, and he cried aloud, "O Moslems, I have for sale a chest—a chest and all that is in it. What will ye give me for the chest, and for the contents of the chest?"

And the merchants said, “What is in the chest?” And Achmet answered, “Nay that I know not, for none may know what is in it until that it is sold.” Then the merchants came together; and one said, “It is a good chest. I will give a toman[114] for it.” And another said, “I will give two tomans.” Then came to them the son of Haji Kas, breathless with much running, and he cried aloud unto the salesman, saying, “Oh, Achmet, sell me the chest for five tomans.” And a Jew merchant answered, “I will give six tomans”; and the Haji’s son said, “I will give thee twelve!”

Then the merchants spake one to another, saying, “Verily we know not what is in the chest; but behold the Haji’s son knoweth, and it seemeth that it is a thing of price. Of a surety it is smuggled tobacco from the warehouse of the Sheikh; or maybe hashish, and worth much gold.” And they that were aforetime backward were now eager to buy.

But though many bid for the chest, yet the Haji’s son bid higher, and Achmet the salesman sold him the chest for sixty tomans; and he wiped his brow, and paid the money and called a porter to bear the chest away.

But the porter who had brought the chest had stood by, listening to the bidding; and he laughed till his legs gave way beneath him, and he rolled on the ground in his mirth. And while the merchants wondered at him, he gat his breath, and sat up, and cried aloud, and said, “By Allah, O Moslems, was there ever seen the like? This man hath bought his own father for the price of sixty tomans. Haji Kas the *Seyyid* is in that great chest!”

And when the merchants heard that saying, they ran{214} upon the chest and brake it open; and Haji Kas sat up, and blinked at them therein. And all the merchants laughed till the bazaar rang with their laughter; and they held their sides, and the tears ran down their faces, and they rolled on the ground whooping, even as the porter had done.

Then Haji Kas arose, and gat him out of the chest; and he and his son slank away in shame together. And it came to pass after a few days, that he sold his house, and all that appertained to him in that city, and departed into another country, and returned to Urmi no more.

Governors in the old days did not often lift their hands against the *Seyyids*; the experience of those who tried to do so, teaching them wisdom. Twice the effort was made; but in each instance the privileged corporation that had religious sentiment behind it was able to win. Once the Vali-Ahd[115] had tried to meet the undoubted difficulty caused by the fact that no governor could keep the Kurdish raiders in order, by making the biggest brigand of the countryside Governor of Urmi province; on the same principle as a certain King of England once made The O'Neill Viceroy of Ireland. The Governor, Hassan Beg of the Marku Kurds, was at least commendably energetic; and being, like all Kurds, a *Sunni*, he despised all *Shiahs* equally, whether they were *Seyyids* or not. He began operations by blowing a batch of them from guns—a fate which they probably richly deserved, but which roused much scandal, for no amount of hereditary sanctity will get you to Heaven in little bits! But presently one such victim escaped. He bribed the artillery-men; and they put him with his arm round the gun's muzzle, instead of with his back to it. (The execution took place in the midst of a big parade-ground, so that the fraud was not too conspicuous.) Bang went the gun: but the holy man stood unharmed. Up went the cry, "A miracle! a miracle!" and the mob immediately assaulted the governor's house. He had taken the precaution of bringing a garrison of his{215} own tribesmen with him to his new post, so the attack failed; but he thought it more prudent to leave the city that night and go home. His tenure of the governorship of Urmi had been brief; but like the kingship of Roumania was "always

a pleasant reminiscence."

In the year 1902 another governor, one Mejid-es-Sultaneh, also attempted reform. He proposed to clean the streets and have a pure water-supply; a scheme which was admirable as far as it went, though an American missionary in the town did suggest that "his Excellency had better make the streets before he scrapes them." Another aspiration of his, expressed in the words that there would never be any real reform in Persia, "till one can see a *Seyyid* hanging on every tree round Urmi," was also a perfectly sound one; but unfortunately he lacked the power to execute his admirable ideas. Thus, when Mohurram came round, friction began. By immemorial custom a deputation of *Seyyids* waits on the governor at that feast; for then (like the Jews of old) they have the right to demand that he "release unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they will." Mejid-es-Sultaneh was willing enough to honour custom, but had let the college of *Seyyids* know, unofficially, that there was one man whom they were not to ask for. It had cost some trouble to get him into the jail, and he was to hang. They accepted at once this challenge to a trial of strength, and demanded that man and no other. The governor had the whole deputation thrashed and turned out of his house; sending orders to the prison to hang the man without more ado.

The *Seyyids* were naturally furious; and they were able to pull strings at Teheran till Mejid-es-Sultaneh was exiled. He only escaped confiscation of his property by executing a hurried deed of gift of the whole of it, in legally binding form, to an English merchant at Tabriz. He trusted absolutely, and justifiably, to that man's verbal promise that the income should be paid over to him, and the capital restored if ever the original owner were in a position to claim it again.

As for trial, or any pretence of justice, even for a man in this position, there was none. Such things are mere

empty{216} words to a ruler who on another occasion invited a prominent Kurdish chief to a conference, swearing on the Koran that, if he came, he should leave Tabriz in safety and honour. The Kurd (Jaffar Agha by name) came on that assurance. He had his conference and started home, loaded with honours and decorations. One hundred yards from the gate of Tabriz he was called back for a last word. He returned fearlessly; entered the reception room—and was shot dead from behind a grating. So the Shah kept faith with a man who trusted to his honour.

Under such rule, government broke down utterly and absolutely in Persia; and the Turks took the opportunity of carrying out the aggression mentioned in the previous chapter, and occupying the strip of frontier they had long coveted. Not content with this, they encouraged a system of open raids over the whole district of Urmi, with the avowed intention of showing the Persians "you cannot control or bridle these Kurds, and so you had better let us do it, for we can." The writer was in Urmi at the time; living, as an Englishman does in these lands, in personal sanctuary. To shoot an Englishman is too dangerous an amusement (fascinating though it admittedly is) for any gentleman to indulge in—unless the temptation is very great indeed. The experience was interesting; for what one saw was anarchy, apparently with no power of redemption. *Vis consili expers* the Government of Persia had always been; and when at last it fell under the weight of its own corruption, there was no force left to set up any fresh rule at all. Folk had been accustomed to look to the *Hukumet* for everything; and when it was gone they lacked the political instinct to set up anything to take its place.

The strangest rumours circulated: such as the statement that a caravan of five hundred camels had arrived in Tabriz from Russia, loaded with nothing but *tanzimat* (reform); or that "Enjuman Effendi" (Monsieur Parliament) had been

appointed governor of the land by the Shah, and that he was a very great man and had very many wives. The collapse of the central Government did not, however, affect daily life in the villages; except that the raiding bands of{217} Kurds walked about the countryside rather more at their ease than was the case normally.

In one instance a party of twelve robbers marked down a village some thirty miles from the frontier; looted it, and insolently drove their plunder along the high roads to their own home again. They made no attempt at concealment or even hurry; and ten miles per diem being about the limit that a sheep can be taken comfortably, the process must have occupied three days at the least. It is true that the Turkish Governor, on hearing of the exploit, did insist on the return of the animals, greatly to the disgust of the raiders. However, they did not go quite without profit; for finding that the beasts had got to go back, they took the precaution of shearing them first!

At the time, we were endeavouring to give the local "Nestorian" clergy a week's instruction in matters pastoral and devotional. As part of the course, we ordered the whole gathering to write a sermon on the text, "As lambs in the midst of wolves." We could not help feeling a profane sympathy with the teaching propounded in one of the discourses;—that undoubtedly Christians were lambs, as Scripture said; but that what was most needful under the circumstances was that they should develop the teeth and claws of wolves! The doctrine received practical support from an incident that occurred before the week ended, when two of the deacons present announced, "By your leave, *Rabbi*, we must go."

"And wherefore, O deacon?"

"Because our village is being attacked by Kurds, *Rabbi*; and it is needful for us to go and help beat them."

Leave was given readily enough; but when was a

respectable "retreat" interrupted by such an incident before?

As for the official who was called Governor of Urmi, he sat in the walled town, and did nothing. Once he expressed a general hope that things would go better in the near future; because he had hired a murderer to assassinate Bedr Ismail Agha, the man who was doing most of the raiding at the time. But even the rôle of First Murderer in the Government{218} troupe was bungled; a gratuitous bit of mismanagement, for there was plenty of talent for the part.

Christian townships in the neighbourhood, finding themselves in daily risk of plunder, sent in to complain to his Excellency; and "soldiers" were actually ordered to go out and protect them. They started; but returned in two hours, stating that they had heard a rumour that there were Kurds on the road. They had, of course, never dreamed of doing anything to molest the people they were sent out to punish; but in compensation, they had robbed all the unfortunate villagers, Christian and Mussulman alike, whom they met upon the way coming to seek shelter in the town!

When one of the townships in question, Gukhtapa, renewed its request for some sort of protection, the governor could only regret his inability to afford any assistance "because the soldiers say that they won't go." He generously offered to send Kurdish irregulars of another tribe, Marku men, who might be persuaded to "sit in the village." "Thank you," said the applicants, "but of the two we prefer the robbers who will go away again, to the robbers who will sit there indefinitely." They then took their own measures for protection; giving hospitality to a party of Tergawari Christians, driven from their homes by the Turkish aggression, and glad to earn their living by so congenial an occupation as fighting for it.

Ultimately, the Ottoman Government sent a "High Commissioner" to settle the disputed frontier; and the

official who appeared was that genial general-utility man of the Empire, Tahir Pasha of Mosul. He settled himself quite comfortably in the house of the Ottoman Consul; a gentleman who (to give a touch of farce to the tragically comic opera that all concerned were playing) was one of the most successful of those "Jilu men" referred to in a previous chapter. This genius had accumulated quite a fortune by collecting money from the charitable in British Columbia for an orphanage in Macedonia (whither he had neither been nor meant to go); and had really carried his nefarious trade to a point where it became almost respectable,{219} because he had actually swindled the Pope! He had got a decoration out of the Holy Father, by posing as an important mountain chief, converted to true Catholicism at the threshold of the Apostles; and by promising to bring his whole tribe to confess the same. One feels that cheating *in excelsis* in this fashion confers a halo of semi-respectability on such a supreme artist; and the impression was apparently shared by the Ottoman Government, for they had felt that no man could be fitter to represent the Sultan in Urmi, and he had been nominated acting Consul accordingly.

The British Consul-General from Tabriz had come over to help in the settlement of the frontier dispute, and a rather delicate point arose in consequence. The Ottoman Consul was, of course, most desirous to come and pay his respects to his esteemed British colleague; but would like to be assured first that the warrant for swindling that was out against him in British Columbia, would not be executed if he came into a British Consulate. He complained sadly that the expenses of entertaining Tahir Pasha were ruining him; but unfeeling people pointed out that he had no cause to grumble. His money had been given for the sustenance of Macedonian orphans; and his Excellency was a Macedonian of sorts, being an Albanian, and (as he was over seventy) most likely an orphan as well. Thus some of

the money was going at last for something that resembled the intention of the donors!

It presently appeared that the instructions the worthy old Pasha had received were, in brief, to waste all the time possible, and do as little else as might be. As these jumped absolutely with his own inclination, he fulfilled them *con amore*; while it was hard to say whether the British Consul was more annoyed or amused at the manœuvres.

"All Kurds are Turkish subjects, surely," said the Pasha mildly; "a treaty says so, somewhere."

"But there are some tribes of Kurds right down on the Indian frontier in Beluchistan, Excellency. Do you mean to claim them too?"

"Well, why not? If they raid over your frontier, let{220} the Sultan know; and he will send a punitive expedition as soon as possible."

Or there might come a mild protest on the part of the Persian Governor, anent the arrival of some two hundred armed Kurds, "to pay their respects to Tahir Pasha."

"What is the meaning of this armed invasion of Persian territory, your Excellency?"

"Well, well, these Persians are hard to deal with. We let their pilgrims go over our frontier to Kerbela in droves, and say nothing; and when a few good peaceable fellows come over to pay their respects to the Sultan's representative you have these complaints at once. So unneighbourly, you know."

To drive a wily old Australian cow may be hard; but it is child's play to getting an old Turk to do business when his instructions are to waste time.

So the frontier dispute dragged on *ad infinitum* till the British Consul left it to settle itself, and went back to Tabriz. The Russians could not allow a country where they had large interests to go to rack and ruin through anarchy, and the present practical occupation of northern Persia was

the result.{221}

CHAPTER XI

A LAND OF TROUBLE AND ANGUISH (URMI TO VAN)

THE country between Urmi and Van is easy, as travel goes in Kurdistan; and, speaking normally, safe. High hills, rising to as much as 11,000 feet, cover the country; and one great mountain saddle, the Chokh range, has to be crossed. But the hills are rounded, and grass-grown in summer; and the valleys wide and fertile, though for the most part uncultivated, and carrying a scanty population. A long winter and heavy snowfall are natural at such an elevation, and a journey at that time of year is always a toilsome experience and may be a dangerous one. It is not pleasant, for instance (as once happened here to the writer), to find oneself in a position where baggage-horses can get neither forward nor back; and where the whole party has the duty of "humping" the loads and carrying them for some hours in deep snow.

That too zealous reformer, Mejid-es-Sultaneh, owns much property among these lower hills; and this fact is responsible for the development of a new type of village, the invention of that English gentleman to whom he assigned his property. It will be understood that "a good head of labour" is as necessary for a Persian estate now as it was for a mediæval manor in England; but conditions may make it difficult to maintain that desirable thing. Hence, when the Englishman found himself charged with a large depopulated estate, he bethought him of settling upon it the dispossessed Christians of Tergawar. They were put there upon the usual terms of the Persian village system, which deserves a word to itself.{222}

The "Lord of the country-side" who owns the land, assigns a certain district to a village. It is his business to provide seed-corn; and in this particular case he built the houses as well, though usually that is not necessary. The villagers then pay him, instead of a money rent, a proportion of the crop, varying from a third to a half of the corn grown. Vineyards pay the same proportion; but if you desire to grow melons, you must ask leave and pay a special rent; for this is a crop that is exhausting for the land, and still more for the water.

A big landlord will often own many villages; and in such cases he places a steward in charge of each, to compute the amount of produce due to him and to receive his proper share. It is easy to understand from this the method by which the "unjust steward" of the parable proposed to defraud his lord: neither is it at all difficult to sympathize with that lord's "commendation," in a land which still believes implicitly in the policy of "setting a thief to catch a thief," and where it is recorded that Ahmed the Calamity and Hassan the Pestilence were made captains of the watch at Baghdad for no other reason than that "they excelled all men in villainy and tricks of cunning."

Both sides profited by the arrangement in the Mejid-es-Sultaneh estate; the owner getting a good supply of labour for a previously unproductive property, and the villagers a new home in the land.

They were of course in some danger from Kurds; and it was to meet this that the new type of village was evolved by the English administrator—a type which is much to his credit as an amateur military engineer. In ordinary villages the flat-roofed shielings are huddled together without plan or defensibility. But in these, a square space of perhaps 2 acres was enclosed by a wall of mud brick some twelve feet high, with projecting towers at the corners and one good strong gate. Then the houses of the village were built

against this wall on the inner side; their flat roofs forming an excellent "banquette" for the defence of the battlemented wall, while the towers provided a flanking fire. The central space was left clear, except for the village{223} church, and provided ample accommodation for the flocks. The Kurds came and reconnoitred, and cursed the inventive and innovating Englishman up hill and down dale. Half a dozen men with flint-locks could keep thirty of the best of them outside such a place; and we believe that no village built on this pattern has ever been seriously attacked.

Normally this district ought to be safe for Europeans; yet it was the scene of one of the narrowest escapes that the writer has ever experienced. In the summer of 1909, when Urmi plain was in the condition of anarchy mentioned in the last chapter, some of the Christian villages protected themselves by enlisting parties of exiles who belonged to the fighting clans of Tergawar; men who loved a battle for its own sake, and who also had a very special personal grudge against the Kurds who were most obnoxious to their hosts. Hence it came to pass that when the Kurds of a certain district came down to plunder the village of Ardishai, with their usual insolent confidence, they met with a most unexpectedly warm reception. In fact they walked straight into a well arranged ambush; whence they only escaped with the loss of fourteen dead, besides wounded; and several captured horses. This was of course a fearful blow to their prestige, and they went home "with their faces blackened," and feeling that something must be done to wipe off that stain.

The most obvious thing to do was to destroy the whole of the next party of travellers that came their way from Urmi district; and, as it happened, this was the writer's caravan. A party was detailed for the job; and when we reached the village of Umbi, one easy day out from Urmi, and asked for hospitality for the night, this party settled

there also, camping on the roof next to the one we were occupying. We were not aware of the fact, and in any case were safe in the village; for any attack there would be at once a breach of hospitality, and a crime for which it would be too easy to fix responsibility. Our would-be murderers, however, made no secret before their hosts as to what their errand was; and the men of the village, though naturally interested and sympathetic, advised them to push the{224} business no farther. "You see, this is an English party;" they argued. "Now we killed just one American three years ago and have not heard the last of that trifle yet.[116] You had better drop the scheme." Finding, however, that their guests were resolute, the hosts were far too good sportsmen to interfere by giving any warning to the intended victims; and the gang, who knew they could easily catch our slow-moving caravan, allowed us to go on our way next day, and followed after at their leisure.

We stopped about noon to call on a small Agha whose hold stood near the road; and were sitting at lunch with him under a tree outside the house when this party of five well-armed Kurds rode up and dismounted. The Agha invited them to join us at our meal; and though we were surprised at their refusal, we did not attach any importance to the matter. We said farewell, and started on the road. As soon as we were gone, however, our host, who had read the signs better, turned at once to his new visitors. "Now then, what is your game? Why would you not eat with the Englishman? or was it me that you had a grudge against?"

The Kurds were as frank with him as with their hosts of the previous night; but he took a different view of the matter.

"No, you don't if you please! I have no special interest in that Englishman or any other; but if he is killed on my land it is me that the Government will come down on. Take another party; it makes no odds to you, and will not

cause trouble for other gentlemen."



THE QUDSHANIS MOUNTAINS.

From the village of Shwawutha, the scene of the incident related on p. 263. The Zab river is just visible at the foot of the glen, and beyond it rises the great mass of the Kokobuland Dagh. Qudshanis lies just below the snow line, at the head of the lateral valley opposite.

No. 10

As there was after all no personal feeling in the matter, they agreed to that compromise; and we proceeded safely. When we heard the tale later we could only be grateful to{225} our host for his consideration; and convinced even more in the semi-fatalistic belief that is apt to soak into one in a land of "*Kismet*"—the belief that every man is immortal till his work is done.

There was an afterpiece to the play; what had very nearly been a tragedy developing into something resembling a farce. This is not unusual in the East; for the angel, (or devil) charged with looking after the Persian and Ottoman empires, has a strong—if grim—sense of humour; and mercifully sees to it that the most serious and painful of matters shall always have also a ridiculous side. Our kind hosts at Umbi, having allowed reasonable time for their guests to carry out their expressed intentions, reported them at Urmi as already accomplished; saying that the Englishman and his party had been actually killed.

"Is it not already done sahib?" is what your servant says to you about some order that he may, or may not, intend to carry out when convenient; and the minds of these gentlemen were working on similar lines. Word was accordingly brought to the British Consul, then staying in Urmi, that some of the men for whom he was responsible had been murdered. At first that official was blankly incredulous. One acquires a large fund of scepticism about all rumours in the East, and this was a man of some experience. Still, the report grew and grew, and was confirmed again and again, and the bald and unconvincing narrative was embellished with corroborative detail; till at last somebody with an artistic mind came in to declare that he had not only seen our corpses lying on a certain pass, but had smelt them as well; and gave the name of the Sheikh whose bridle was now adorned by the writer's beard! Even consular scepticism broke down under this strain; and a caravan was got ready, and even coffins ordered for us so that decent interment might be given to our bodies; when a Nestorian *qasha* turned up opportunely from the mountains, and was summoned before the Consul at once.

"Have you heard anything of this reported murder of Mr. Wigram on the Jerma pass, on the 25th day of the month?" was the query.{226}

"I have sahib; but I think that on the whole it is not true, because I had tea with him at Qudshanis" (well beyond the scene of the supposed murder), "on the 30th."

As the road goes north-west towards Van, the traveller gradually enters the land of the Armenian Christians, leaving the Assyrian or Nestorian land behind. Kurdistan, which is the general though unofficial title for the land where the Kurds live, embraces both; and of course any Turk will tell you that there is no such land as Armenia or Armenistan. Under the old régime, the word was carefully erased from all maps or books that entered the country,

[117] lest erroneous teaching should be given in the Sultan's schools; and much in the same spirit, books on chemistry were sometimes barred, because they contained the treasonable formula, H_2O. The seditiousness of this is perhaps not obvious: but it will be clear to the meanest capacity when it is explained that H_2 means, and can only mean, Hamid II, Sultan of Turkey; and if you supply the obviously understood symbol = between the 2 and the O, you get the appalling doctrine, "Hamid II = Zero," which clearly cannot be allowed to pass.

Armenia then, does not exist; though there are districts where Armenians are the prevailing type of Christians; and we are now entering one of them. Of course there is a certain amount of "interlacing," and isolated villages of either form of Christianity are found scattered among the districts mainly inhabited by the other.

Bashkala, which will be found upon the map, is the seat of government for the district; and this place is inhabited mainly by Jews, who are, as always, the financiers and merchants of the land. It is a postal centre, principally remarkable for the fact that the post goes to that point from Van, for distribution to such centres as Julamerk, Neri, and Diza; but only strays on to them, when a *zaptieh* or policeman happens to be going in that direction. Then he takes on the letterbag, provided that he does not{227} forget, or that it is not too heavy for him to carry. Hence letters and papers sometimes spend some time in that office; and we remember the courteous remark of the *mutaserif*[118] of the place, who observed to us when we called upon him on the way to Van after a winter spent in Qudshanis, "*Effendim*, the papers you used to receive during the winter had very good pictures in them." It sounded cool, but after all, the poor man had little to read; the papers were none the worse for his looking at them, and he never meddled with the letters. Also, he always sent them on when he had done with them, and his action did not even

imply any delay in the forwarding; so it seemed to us that there was nothing very much to complain about.

Somewhat to the west of the Urmi-Van road, and up among the highest of the mountains, stands one interesting memorial of the past. One particular valley runs down from the edge of lake Van to the Tigris; a pass open practically all the year round, between the plain of Mesopotamia and the Armenian plateau. It should be a highroad for commerce; but the Kurds who live in it are too turbulent to allow any traveller to pass that way as a rule, and it is very little known in consequence. It was a passage of strategic importance, however, in the days when Rome held Nisibis as her frontier post on the Persian border; and when Armenia was a buffer state of most uncertain loyalty, between the Roman and Sassanid Persian empires. Hence it was a road to guard; and Roman engineers planted upon it one of the grandest of Roman fortresses, which stands to this day practically unruined. Diocletian, who fortified this strategic frontier, was probably its builder; and it must have been evacuated when Jovian ceded the provinces to Persia some fifty years after his day. Since then it has remained derelict, for anyone to occupy who cared; and so it stands still—one of the grandest Roman relics anywhere.

It is a great square fortress, built after the pattern of their camps, with the prætorium as its citadel in the centre{228} of the western side. One wall, the northern, has been pulled down to provide material for the mediæval Kurdish *kala* into which the general's quarters have been transformed; but this probably embodies much of the old citadel in itself. The whole would well repay examination by an expert—provided that its present owner could be got to understand the difference between antiquarianism and espionage, which is doubtful in the extreme.

A miserable Kurdish village occupies the interior of this grand fort; the hovels being built, of course, from the hewn

stones of the walls. But even these "beggars hutting in the palace" are dimly aware that such a place has harboured greater men than they; and tell you that it was the work of giants and enchanters—at which one does not wonder.

The writer once visited the spot, in company with the British military Consul of Van; being attracted both by the interest of the building itself, and also by a story that there was a hoard of ancient documents in some unknown tongue in one of the rooms of the castle. The tale is quite probably true, though the documents may be of any date; but the present owner of the place politely denied all knowledge of them. His guest was a marvel of erudition, he declared, but had been misinformed in this particular; and so he changed the subject to something that interested him more. This was the Consul's Mannlicher rifle, a beautiful tool that always excited envy everywhere, and was invaluable as a topic of conversation. Our host examined it, dandled it, played with it; and finally proposed a fair exchange—that rifle against his newly married wife! A deal which the Englishman rather ungallantly declined.

Disappointed in this, the Agha started yet another hare, with a hint that if we could oblige him in this, he might find it possible to refurbish his own memory in the matter of the documents. He told us a long tale of woe, of which the principal feature was that his hereditary enemy had recently been building a fine new castle, just in the one spot where he least wished to see it. We sympathized, but were{229} not very clear what we could do in the matter, till we were enlightened by a confidential whisper from our host. "Look here Bey, I know the ways of you English, and you're sure to have a little dynamite; you always have. Could you not spare me just a few cartridges? I want—*to kill a few fish*!"

We were the guests of the Agha for the evening, and ate of course what was set before us; next day, however, there

was some bargaining to be done for the fowl that was to have the honour of providing our supper that night. It is always well to buy your fowl in the morning, because it saves time at the hour of cooking; and it is easier to drive a bargain when you are obviously not dependent on the completion of the purchase for getting your next meal. Here the Consul's kavass hit on an ingenious expedient. The Consul had a good rook-rifle with him; and the kavass, a Serb by nationality, was a very good shot with it. Five piastres was the sum demanded for the old cock we had fixed on; two was our offer, which is the usual market rate. The kavass produced the rifle and made a sporting suggestion. "Look here," he said to the owner, "the bird is about eighty yards off. If I bring him down with one shot, will you let me have him for two piastres? If I have to spend a second cartridge, you shall have the full five." A Kurd has a sport-loving soul, and the offer was accepted at once; particularly as their rifles do not throw too accurately. The kavass bowled the fowl over neatly; and the same trick got us several dinners at a fair rate that journey, though naturally it could not be played in the same place twice.

When this frontier province was occupied by the Turks (an event that occurred shortly before the revolution), it was strongly garrisoned from end to end. But the sufferings of the unhappy soldiers in the ensuing winter were terrible. No provision was made for their accommodation; no medical stores were provided; and hardly any food. It says much for the troops that they did not loot every village in the neighbourhood; but the fact is that "Nefer Mustafa" (the Turkish Tommy Atkins) is the most easily disciplined{230} and normally one of the kindliest of men. He is not the most intelligent of soldiers, but he is the most obedient; and he will march and starve, fight or freeze, and die in scores of dysentery and cholera, not only without a mutiny, but even without a sense of grievance against

anybody; though he can hardly be ignorant that the rascally minor officials are making their profit out of the stores which he does not get. In one particular case, two battalions, amounting to perhaps 1200 men in all (the contractors probably drew stores, &c., for the 2000 they should have been, but that is a detail), were marched from Van to Tergawar late one autumn. There they remained, billeted in the deserted villages, till the following spring; when such of them as could walk were brought back to Van once more. Four months' peace service in that district, without a shot being fired, had brought those 1200 men down to 400; of whom a bare half were able to march at all! It was simply the work of cold, hunger, fever, and neglect! Things did improve with the army under the new régime, or did for a while at any rate; but the pre-revolutionary state of things would have been regarded as exaggerated for a comic opera but for the tale of human suffering that it implied.

The pay of the soldier was nominally one or two piastres a day; but when he got this magnificent sum, which was not often, it was paid him in *sanads*, Government assignats, not cash. The local treasury, moreover, would not cash them (in fact, they were usually payable in some other province than that where the poor recipient was quartered), and no shop would look at them as payment for goods. Certain merchants made a business of buying them, at ⅕th of the face value, and presenting them in the proper quarter, when they might perhaps get half the sum due. The Government would be debited with the full amount; and the officials got the balance. By a final touch, which surely nobody but Ottoman officials of the old régime could have conceived, the Government would not receive its own bank-notes from its own soldiers in payment of its own taxes! Those had to be paid in gold, the Government only accepting silver at a heavy premium.{231}

Add to this that the soldier, nominally enlisted for five

years with the Colours, and seven in the "*Redif*" or Reserve, was never allowed his discharge. Greybeards in the ranks were the commonest of sights; and we have seen men serving in 1905 who bore the medal granted for the defence of Plevna in 1878, and who had never been discharged.

Bashkala, to which we must now return, is two days journey from Van; and the road crosses the lofty Chokh range, an obstacle easy enough in summer, but uncommonly formidable in winter. At the best of times it is impassable to artillery, though a road could be constructed across it with a little labour. Half of it has in fact been accomplished, and a properly graded track, with wide sweeps and zigzags, goes up part of the ascent. Like most Turkish roads, however, it has neither beginning nor end, and nobody ever uses it. A little more trouble over the removal of the rocks in which it terminates at each end (and which keep it inacessible to all beasts of burden) would have made it useful. However, when this point had been reached, the official interested in it was recalled, or the money ran out, or the *Vali* wanted the funds for something else; and so it remains unfinished and useless to this day. It is somehow characteristic of the Arab and Ottoman races (though not of all Orientals) that they can form magnificent designs, and can begin and work at them for a time. Seldom, however, can they finish them, and never can they undertake the toil of maintenance and repair. So magnificent monuments and civil works fall into utter decay, and boats go to ruin everywhere, for lack of a ha'porth of tar.

One of the gorges of the Chokh range was the scene of a strange episode during the Armenian massacres of 1896. A party of Armenians, mostly women and children, were endeavouring to escape by this route, in the early spring. At that season frequent avalanches descend from the upper slopes to the bottom of the defiles, choking them for

hundreds of yards on end. The streams of course make their way under the snow, winding through caverns which no man dare enter; for the water nearly fills the tunnel, and the roofs are constantly collapsing as the melting proceeds. {232} As the party approached one of these caverns, making their way along the track on the hillside above it, they found their pursuers close behind. "Let us fall into the hands of God rather than into those of the Kurds," said their leader; and wading into the stream, they entered the snow-cave. As they did so another avalanche thundered down the slope behind them blocking the entrance of their refuge and burying them under the snow. "They have gone to their deaths," said the pursuers, and halted where they were. But, as a matter of fact, the refugees were just within the cavern when the avalanche fell. This naturally dammed back the ice-cold torrent for a while, and they were able to crawl down the empty bed to the lower end of the passage. Here they emerged, hidden from their enemies by the curvature of the valley, and so escaped!

It may well be recorded too that at least one man of this district, Agha Zohar of Zirnek, sheltered the Armenians who fled to his country for refuge in that black time. When the slaughterers came in pursuit, and said that it was the order of the Sultan that the Armenian dogs should die, he replied proudly that he knew of no order of any Sultan that could constrain a gentleman to surrender his guests to the sword! The refugees had brought some few cattle with them, and these they offered as a reward to their protector. He not only refused to accept them, but gave them pasturage with his own herds till it was safe for the men to return to their homes.

The best type of Moslem gentleman is unsurpassed in any land.

The half-way house between Bashkala and Van is the city of Khoshab, which boasts the one castle of our acquaintance, which really embodies the dreams of

Gustave Doré. As we give a picture of it, we may spare the reader any attempt at a description; but may say that though the main part of the architecture is Seljuk in style and date, it presents some features that are of European character, and support the local tradition that its real designer was a "Frank" of Italian birth—though whether a captive or an adventurer is left uncertain. The same tradition says also that the{233} castle was built by the illustrious Saladin, the only Kurd whom history is able to mention with esteem. The place may perhaps have been part of his family property, but as he was born in Egypt, he can hardly have dwelt in it himself. Certainly there was a stronghold here long before the days of either Saladin or Mohammed, for the masonry of the lower courses of one of the great towers cries aloud that it is Urartian. It was built, that is, by the men of that ancient kingdom whose capital was at Dhuspas, (which is Van), in the days when Tiglath-Pileser ruled at Nineveh; and which disputed the sovereignty of Asia with the might of Assur itself. That subject, however, belongs to another chapter.

In the neighbourhood of Khoshab there is one monument that was probably venerable even when the Urartian foundations of that grand castle were laid; and that is one of the finest "*ziarets*" that we have seen in Kurdistan. A great isolated hill, Boshet Dagh by name, stands up in the vicinity; rising to 11,000 feet, and commanding one of the grandest views in the country, from Ararat in the north to Shamsdin in the south. It is yet so easy of ascent that a horse can easily be ridden the whole way up; and it forms an ideal "High Place," like those of the Old Testament.

Here, the men of old time (and how old one is afraid to say) constructed a Temple of the orthodox Semitic pattern, such as once stood at Jerusalem, and still remains at Baalbek. It comprises a court for worshippers, where sacrifice can be offered; an outer sanctuary; and an inner

shrine. All is rudely built of course, but all the essential features are there; even to the detail of "ceremonial pillars," like the "Jachin and Boaz" of Solomon's temple, which are here represented by a round score of rough dwarf columns. What these stood for in the mind of their builders it is hard to say. They are a witness, perhaps, of a covenant between man and God, like those which Jacob set up at Bethel. In any case, there they stand; a token of how thoroughly the most primitive form of Semitic religion is a living reality to-day. No fossiliferous strata preserve the forms of past ages more thoroughly than does the corporate mind of the{234} living East; though it is often hard to extract the fossils, and harder to ascertain their true significance.

An easy road takes us from Khoshab to Van, down a valley that should bear a large population; but where to-day nothing but a chilly wind wanders, that makes living unpleasant, and is said to blight wheat. "There were Armenian villages here once," said a Nestorian to us, "but when the Kurds turned them out, this wind came, and now none can live here. It is the breath of the curse of the dispossessed upon their oppressors." And so the fertile Havatsor plain lies empty, though villages abound upon its borders; and though a prosperous little town stands where the road begins to climb the low pass leading over the last range to the gardens and orchards of Van.{235}

CHAPTER XII

A SLOUGH OF DISCONTENT

(VAN AND THE ARMENIANS)

WE enter a new world as we come up from the south to the land which is never called Armenia officially, but where

the Armenians dwell. The great plain of Mesopotamia, the wild gorges of the range of Taurus, are left behind; and the traveller emerges on to a lofty plateau, averaging 6000 feet above the sea, and dotted with the cones of one of the great volcanic fields of the world. Sipan and Ararat are both magnificent peaks, though the crater of the latter has been weathered away. Nimrud Dagh offers the student of eruptive phenomena such a field for his study as can hardly be matched in the world; and the lava flows from Mount Etna, which are out and away the most magnificent in Europe, are not to be compared for a moment with the twenty miles square of "black glacier" that have streamed from the fissures of Tendurek Dagh. These mountains, as already related, are grouped around the site which tradition has assigned to the Garden of Eden; and it is on the peaks of Niphates, the Hakkiari mountains to the southward, that Milton has pictured Satan alighting to wreak his vengeance on God's new creation Man.

One of these great lava flows, that of Nimrud Dagh, forms the dam that holds up the large salt lake of Van; a body of water of about the size of the lake of Geneva, but carrying almost as much mineral matter in suspension as does the companion lake of Urmi. In this case, however, the mineral is not ordinary salt, but borax (bi-borate of sodium, to be accurate); so that the water is pleasanter to swim in, and not so absolutely fatal to animal life.{236}

At certain seasons of the year the mouths of the rivers that enter the lake swarm with fish—a variety of bleak. They run up into fresh water to spawn, and in the process are scooped out by the basket-load. Certain types of water-snake also haunt the rocky shores.

These are about four feet long, and creamy white in colour (or appear so, when seen through some depth of water); and they have the characteristic wedge-shaped head that one generally associates with poison.

Given better means of transport, and better government,

one may yet see Lake Van become a health resort and a *bad*; for its waters are certainly curative in certain types of skin disease. The writer has known an obstinate case of soriasis cured by a summer spent in camp on the lake, with regular bathing as part of the day's programme. The effect on human hair is also very peculiar; for an English lad with ordinary light-brown hair developed, under similar treatment, an aureole of the purest gold ever seen on human head. The change seemed permanent too, at least as regarded all that was above scalp-level at the time. Later growth was unfortunately of the original hue!

This country was formerly the home of one of the great empires of ancient history; that of the Urartians, or Khaldians, who could dispute the hegemony of Asia with Assur, at the time when the first colonists were settling on the seven bare hills that afterwards were Rome. Van (Dhuspas as it was then called) was their capital; and their kings had their palace on the great limestone ridge that rises, like the vertebrae of some huge saurian, 300 feet above the alluvial plain. As a stronghold this rock was impregnable, and could turn back even Assur at her strongest; and to this day the masses of cyclopean masonry on its crest, and the scores of inscribed cuneiform tablets on its precipitous faces, bear witness to the might of its former lords. The language in which these inscriptions are written is unknown elsewhere (unless it may prove to have affinity with the mysterious Hittite, in spite of the difference of script); but fortunately a tri-lingual inscription left by Xerxes the son of Darius has enabled the records{237} to be deciphered. They do not, as a rule, possess as much interest as the Assyrian inscriptions; and are usually to the effect that "I, Menuas son of Ishpuinis, set up this stone, and invoke the Curse of Cowdray upon the man who throws it down." Menuas, and his son Argistis, were the two most powerful monarchs who occupied the throne of Dhuspas; and their reigns (B.C. 820

to 760 or thereabouts) coincided with a period of decadence in the rival power of Assyria. But in 735 B.C. the Empire of Urartu succumbed before Tiglath Pileser II; though their then king, Sharduris II, was able to make good his defence of this unconquerable citadel.

The plateau of Van is at present the home of the Armenian race; but it is very doubtful whether these have any connexion with the aboriginal Khaldian inhabitants. Their own traditions absolutely contradict the theory; but their modern national writers are apt to claim such descent, now that European scientists have made out the meaning of the inscriptions. Whatever their blood may be, there the Armenians are now; but it is one of the features of that most tangled problem, the Armenian question, that members of the race are never more than a minority, wherever they are found.

Men of that nationality exist everywhere; and no "shadrach" in a blast furnace refuses more obstinately to melt and become assimilated to the rest of the iron ore, than they refuse to assimilate themselves to their neighbours. They are found elsewhere only in colonies; but even in this their original home, massacre, oppression, and the deliberate planting of counter-balancing colonies of Kurds in villages whence the original owners have been expelled, has reduced them to something less than half the present population.

As a people there are few who have a good word for them. They are said to be cowardly and treacherous; to be mere money-grubbers, and so on *ad nauseam*. The charges vary; but all agree that the objects of them are objectionable somehow. They seem, in fact, to be a sort of Dr. Fell of nationalities; for every one dislikes them, though{238} often enough they cannot tell the reason. Even the writer, who has not the least objection to thieves, murderers, and devil-worshippers, and who has a kindly feeling for a successful cheat, admits to getting on less

well with Armenians than with other Orientals.

And yet there is much about them that anyone must admire. They have, in fact, much in common with the Jew, who excites much the same feeling among many estimable people! Both have the same attachment, alike to money and to their own peculiar form of religion. Both have the same power of endurance and toughness. And as both have had much the same treatment for generations, and both are nations without a country, they have developed much the same characteristics. Money and intrigue have been their only weapons; and they have naturally come to think these the most important of all things. We can have nothing but admiration for their devotion to their nation, with which their religion and their church is bound up; and they have a high sense of their duty to it, as shown by their educational institutions. Men call them a nation of cowards; but that charge at least is false. In the massacres of 1895, armed men were butchering unarmed; and there was no test of anything but passive endurance. Yet how many could have saved their lives by a mere verbal acceptance of Islam? We shall have a good deal to say to the discredit of the revolutionaries among them, the "*Fedais*;" but at least the terror that that very small body could inspire among Turks and Kurds in three provinces ought alone to acquit them of any reproach of cowardice.

Both as nation and as church they have a long history, for which we may refer the reader to such works as Lynch's "Armenia." They have been subject to the Ottoman Turks since the year 1365, when the latest of a series of Armenian kingdoms finally collapsed. But outlying colonies of their nation exist, as is well known, in several lands, notably in Persia and India.

Their Christianity dates back to 312 A.D. when the whole people was converted by the joint efforts of their king,{239} Tiridates, and Saint Gregory the Illuminator. The Greek Church calls them heretical; but their heresy is in

truth no more than a resolution to maintain the independence of their church, which is now the sole expression of their nationality, and is prized accordingly. It is true that they refuse to accept one of the Councils that most of the world calls "General," viz. that of Chalcedon; but they have been at some pains to insert into their version of the creed words expressly condemnatory of that peculiar "Monophysite" heresy which their rejection of Chalcedon is supposed to affirm; and their real cause for disagreeing with that Council was its recognition of the Primacy of the Patriarch of Constantinople.

For some time after their conquest the Armenians had nothing particular to complain of in their lot as Ottoman subjects. The Turk had no cause to fear anybody, for his dominion was unshaken, and it is only when he fears that he is oppressive and cruel. Moreover if his method of government did suggest the habits of a man who lives on capital rather than income, there was still a good deal of capital left, and all was comfortable for every one while it lasted. The Armenians were rather the favourites among the subject races. They were the *millet-i-zadik*, the loyal people, who had no friends outside the empire, and no political aspirations, but were content to be Ottoman subjects provided that their religious institutions were respected. Any interference with these was the last thing that the Turk contemplated; for the Mussulman was, to do him justice, the first ruler that was really tolerant in religious matters. Armenians were very convenient underlings in all the work of governing. "We Turks do not know how to make money, we only know how to take it;" and a Turk does not know to this day, and probably never will learn, how really to govern a country. His sole conception is to occupy the land, and take as much money from his subjects as his needs require. His instincts are really those of the nomad; the *rayats* are his sheep and cows,—there to be milked. He does not want to kill them,

for he is a kindly fellow; and besides, who ever kills his own cattle{240} wantonly? But if a sheep exhibits an unpleasant independence of disposition, and propagates the blasphemous doctrine that it was created for other things than the due provision of milk, wool, and mutton in due season for its lawful owner, the shepherd is apt to say it is a vicious beast, and to take measures accordingly.

The country that the Turk acquired had of course to be administered somehow; but it was not Turks by blood that did the administering. The high officials were usually the selected children, taken from their Christian parents by the "Janissary" tribute (which provided also the *corps d'elite* of the army). Or else they were European adventurers and renegades; or (in the case of many of the very best of them) Albanians. The underlings were very largely Armenians, who form most admirable subordinates in all Government offices. They were never trusted with any high executive posts; but they did all the inferior work, and no objection was raised to their filling their own pockets the while.

There were isolated cases of oppression in plenty, as there always will be when Armenian and Turk deal with one another; but it was not Turkish tyranny that was invariably to blame. We have known of an Armenian father, on his death-bed, giving his last charge to his son, as follows: "Grigor, these are the last words of your father; and see that you honour and obey them, as such words should be honoured."

"I will my Father; on my head and eyes be it," said the youth.

"My son, never pay your taxes until you have been thrashed."

Under these circumstances, it really does not prove brutality in the tax-collector, if he sometimes thinks he may as well begin with the stick, and so save trouble all

round.[119]

The fact is, that to try and get the better of the Government in a bargain (or for that matter, of anybody else) is{241} an Armenian's notion of sport; and abstractedly, there is as much to be said for it as for professional football! Very pretty fencing sometimes results, as the following case may show. Educational institutions and church property have to be registered in the names of trustees; and, in consideration of the fact that they pay no taxes, certain fees are demanded when a new name has to be registered. The idea of saving that expense appealed to all Armenians; and there was the further consideration that no one of them ever feels any confidence in another's honest administration of any trust fund. A brilliant idea occurred to some genius. He would secure a trustee who was indubitably honest and immortal as well; the property should stand in the name of the Patron Saint!

So, in one instance (the thing was done repeatedly) the school attached to the church of SS. Peter and Paul was solemnly registered in the names of Peter, son of Jonas, fisherman by trade, resident at Capernaum in the province of El Kuds (Jerusalem), and Paul, father's name unknown, tentmaker by trade, resident at Tarsus in the province of Adana. The scheme worked admirably for a while; and when the Ottoman officials realized what was being done, and objected to losing their fees, it must be owned that they played the game prettily. They sent in a formal notification to the Armenian authorities, that they understood that these two trustees, Petrus Effendi and Paulus, were now dead; and (so far as their information went) that both gentlemen had died intestate. If this were so, then in course of law their trust property would revert to the "Ministry of Pious Benefactions," whence very little of it would ever come out for the use of any Armenians!

There was a terrible scare for a while among those

concerned; but Turkish good nature came into play, and the matter was dropped, in consideration of proper trustees being registered in future—and no doubt a decent *bakhshish* to the officials concerned.

While the nation as a whole was not badly off, individuals were often in a position of privilege, owing to some personal claim that they happened to have on some official. One of{242} these, which endures to the present day, is so remarkable as to deserve special notice.

The house of the Armenian priest of Adeljivas, on Lake Van, is officially recognized as having perpetual immunity from all forms of taxation. The family legend has it that their ancestor was the personal servant of Ali, the nephew of the Prophet, in some warlike expedition that he made. The scene of the campaign is said to have been Egypt.

Ali was hit in some skirmish by an arrow, which pierced his heel and broke in the wound. The steel could not be found and extracted, and signs of mortification set in, so that the doctors gave up hope. Still the Khalif, though he thought himself dying, insisted on rising from his couch to say his prayers as a good Mussulman should; while his faithful Christian servant stood behind him the while. One of the attitudes of Moslem prayer involves bowing forward from a kneeling posture till the forehead touches the ground. (It is this attitude that makes such a headgear as the fez or turban obligatory for a Moslem. The hat is not removed in prayer, and yet the forehead must touch the ground.) Naturally, a wound on the heel was drawn open by this act, and the Armenian saw the arrowhead in the flesh. He, prompt man, dropped on his knees, got a good hold of it with his teeth, and pulled! The steel came out, but Ali fainted with the pain, and the servant fled, fearing he had killed his master. The latter recovered, however, and ordered search to be made for his benefactor; and when he had found him, told him to name his own reward. Perpetual immunity for all males of his house from all

taxes was what the practically minded Armenian chose; and Ali granted him this boon at once, giving him a piece of his own robe in testimony. Each successive Khalif has recognized the act of his great predecessor, and in many cases has given a *firman* declaring the same; and these documents are now stored in the house of the present holder of the privilege. They naturally form a most interesting collection; ranging, as they do, from the great purple and gold parchments, works of art of great value to connoisseurs, which were granted by Sulieman the{243} Magnificent and Murad the "Father of Clubs," down to the flimsy half-sheet of notepaper which bears the seal of Abdul Hamid II.

With them is kept what purports to be the original fragment of the robe of Ali; which is a valuable possession in itself, for water in which it has been dipped is a specific for most diseases for all faiths. The piece of stuff has some unusual qualities certainly, if it is genuine; for it is said to have lasted undecayed through some thirteen centuries of soaking and drying again. As for the cures it works, they are genuine enough, provided that the patient has sufficient faith!

Gradually, however, the comfortable state of things referred to, from which both Ottomans and Armenians profited, changed and took a bad turn. The Ottoman Government grew worse itself absolutely; and much worse relatively to the progress made by other nations in Europe. Turks saw one Christian nation after another (Greek, Bulgar, and Serb) slip from their control, and grew more and more suspicious of those that remained; while these became more and more aware and resentful of their sufferings. The old oppression and corruption grew worse; while the old laziness and good nature that had tempered things helped less. The latter qualities, however, are not quite extinct even yet, as a case from the writer's own knowledge may illustrate.

An unfortunate Assyrian *qasha* was arrested on some charge or other; and after he had endured some months of close confinement in a very foul prison, was tried and fully acquitted—and then sent back to prison again indefinitely, because he could not pay to the jailer the fees he had incurred during his avowedly illegal confinement! One must admit that the same thing used to happen in England during the eighteenth century; but perhaps the English official would not have been as kindly as was the Ottoman *Vali*, who replied to the intercession of the writer by saying, "Well it is a hard case. Look here, *Effendim*, you can have him out any Sunday for service, if you will promise to send him back on the Monday!{244}"

That official's successor, by the way, had the idea of doing things more in order; and signalized his departure from the old slack ways by inviting any folk who had the misfortune to be under sentence of death in his province, to come in and be executed without more delay. When the order had gone out, he set about inquiring how many he might expect to surrender themselves; and found that the number of gentlemen who were under sentence of outlawry in his jurisdiction, and liable to death or imprisonment for life on arrest, amounted to between seven and eight hundred, and included every Kurdish Agha of any note in the *vilayet*![120] The decree caused much inconvenience; for naturally there was some delicacy felt about coming to pay your respects to the new governor under the circumstances.

While the Government got worse, the national self-consciousness of the Armenians developed; particularly in the light of the fact that they saw how other subject nations, who made sufficient noise, were given their independence by Europe. They began demanding reform, and a measure of autonomy; requests which it was natural they should make, in light of the fact that they could not help being aware that they were far cleverer and more

adaptable than the Turks, and that nevertheless they were treated as an inferior race by them. On the other hand, the Turkish feeling was "This country is ours and we mean to rule it. Equality of treatment such as these Armenians demand is a sheer impossibility; for the reason that the races are not equal. While we have the power, we can keep them under; but to put them on an equality means that in a very few years we shall be under them." Reform is anathema to the Turk, for he knows (even if he cannot put the matter into words) that reform means subjection of the Turk to the *rayāt*.

Armenians, and many of the friends of the Armenians, seem unable to understand this side of the question. They cried out in horror at the steps (certainly sufficiently grim{245} ones) which the Turk took to preserve his threatened rule: and not without full cause; for the steps referred to were the Armenian massacres. Still, the fact is that if you, being in the same field with a bull, choose to wave a red handkerchief, it really is no use to explain that any animal of ordinary intelligence ought to have known that you only wanted to blow your own nose; and that anyhow the creature's prejudice against red is very unreasonable! The Turk thinks he has a right to rule; but the only methods he knows are those which did not shock the conscience of anybody in the seventeenth century, but do shock the European conscience now; and hence his verdict was, "The way to get rid of the Armenian question is to get rid of the Armenians."

This was how matters stood between the parties in the period 1904-1910 when the writer was resident in Van. At that time the reforming or revolutionary party among the Armenians was known by the generic name of the "*Fedais*;"[121] and was divided internally into two parties, the "*Armeni*" who were more or less moderate in their views and methods, and the "*Tashnak*"[122] society, which advocated open violence.

The line which the Tashnak brotherhood followed was simply this:—to provoke open massacre by deeds that they knew must infuriate the Turk; in the hope that if only the massacre was horrible enough, European intervention would follow. There are perhaps two things that may be said in excuse for this appalling line of action. First, that the Tashnakists did expose themselves pretty freely to those perils which they were deliberately drawing down on their unfortunate fellow countrymen; and second, that they had seen success follow the adoption of very similar methods in Greece, Serbia, and Bulgaria. The headquarters{246} of their organization were in the Caucasus, that sink of all that is disorderly in the Russian Empire; but they had their local leaders in Turkey, and Van was one of their most important centres. Their object was the creation of an independent or autonomous Armenia; and they worked on parallel, but by no means on friendly, lines with the "Young Turk" Party.

As to their methods, Armenian sympathizers were expected to support them voluntarily; but blackmail and terrorism were also used freely—particularly on the wealthier merchants, who (having something to lose) were not merely blind opponents of the Turkish régime. Thus in one case a merchant was captured, and simply given the choice between paying £100 to the cause, or forfeiting his ears; when he offered £50, he was told that in that case only one ear would be taken. Under that pressure he paid, and was released; with the warning that immediate death would follow any attempt to obtain redress from the Government.

In like fashion, the Bishop of Akhtamar, near Van, was deliberately murdered; either for not supporting the movement with church funds, or—as some said—for not exerting himself sufficiently to obtain redress from the Government for his oppressed flock.

Sometimes, however, they did execute a sort of irregular

justice. One notorious Kurdish oppressor at least was found shot; and information was sent to the Government that this was the justice administered by the Tashnakist organization for what that man had done, and that therefore if any of the dead man's immediate *rayats* were charged with it, the Government officials would hear more of the matter. Had they confined themselves, under the existing circumstances, to this twentieth-century version of the *Vehm-gericht*, it would not have been difficult to sympathize with them.

Their local organization consisted of a small "inner ring," which had not more than a dozen members at most. Next to them came perhaps 600 "sworn soldiers," who were well armed with Mauser pistols, and had each of them taken{247} an oath to fight to the death under the orders of the "ring," and never to surrender under any circumstances. Beyond these again were "adherents" in indefinite number (perhaps 3000 in all), for whom guns had been smuggled in, and stored in secret arsenals; with the idea that this force could be called to arms if ever an opportunity of open rebellion arrived. If the massacre they courted should begin, these arms could of course be of use for defensive purposes.

The guns were a "scratch lot;" the best being Mausers, but the majority Russian military rifles. It would seem that discipline in the Caucasus was benevolently slack, and that very few questions were asked if a soldier sold his rifle for vodka. They had also a good supply of bombs, the material for which was transported from the Caucasus, and made up locally by a chemist of the band.

In the summer of 1905, the Fedais at large attempted what might be called a guerrilla war on a fairly large scale in the district of Mush, to the west of Lake Van. They said they were interfering to protect the peasants from the troops. The troops said that they had been marched down to protect the peasants from the brigands. And the

unfortunate peasants heartily wished both parties away! In any case, there were some 300 Tashnakists wandering in the land, having arrived in small parties from Russia; and they were levying open war on the Government, which had to reinforce the local garrison by some 6000 men to deal with the annoyance, and then failed to catch them. One may have one's own opinion of the cause and methods of the Fedais; but it must be admitted that their claim that Armenians proved themselves to be as good fighting men individually as any Turk was well substantiated.

In one case, a party of some twenty of these desperadoes were fairly caught by 700 Government troops, regular and irregular, upon an isolated and waterless hill. It did seem that these men were cornered, for there was not cover for a rat to escape by, and no man can fight against thirst. However, the Armenians did not wait for the next day's attack, but came down that moonless night, provided with{248} the weapons they had—rifles, bombs, and electric torches. Obviously, they had a leader with a head on his shoulders, for their plans were regularly laid. They advanced in couples; and as soon as a challenge was heard Armenian A threw the flashlight from his electric torch on to the sentry, and Armenian B threw the bomb at him and annihilated him. The explosion roused the camp; but the band of Fedais rushed straight on, flashing their lights and throwing their bombs at anything that came in their way. Naturally, half trained troops were not going to face Sheitan himself in this style. They broke; and the band went through without the loss of a man, thanks to an ingenious combination of the tactics of Gideon with those of the modern anarchist.

On another occasion the result was not quite so successful, though the revolutionaries secured a full price for every man they lost.

Eighteen Fedais, their work done, were endeavouring to leave the country, but were forced by sheer hunger to halt

near a friendly village, while food was provided for them. Somehow, the fact of their presence leaked out, and the Kurds of the neighbourhood gathered to the prey. The men took refuge in three small caves that stood side by side, serving, as is often the case, for sheepfolds. These were hollowed artifically in loose conglomerate rock, their roof being formed by a comparatively thin shelf of projecting limestone. The Fedais put their bombs in readiness at the cave mouths; these forming their sole weapon: though the fact that they were carrying some £6000 in gold on their persons made them a prize worth winning. One party of Kurds occupied the top of the shelf of rock, while the main body prepared for a frontal attack. As these rushed up the slope, an Armenian in the central cave took up a bomb from the heap that lay ready, and hurled it at the enemy. His aim was not too good, however, for the missile hit the edge of the rock and exploded; the concussion naturally detonating the whole magazine. Of course the six Armenians in that cave were never seen again; though the writer was shown some of the coins that were then in their waist-belts, and which had in several cases been blown {249} clean into the rock, looking as if they had been battered with a hammer on an anvil. If the garrison perished, however, their cave was turned for the moment into a great cannon. Every Kurd in the path of the explosion was killed; and the roof of the cavern, with all the men on it, disappeared into space. Thirty-five Kurds missing altogether, besides a number wounded, was fair recompense for the loss of six men. The assailants had no wish to face the two remaining caves after the reception they got from the first one, and the rest of the party effected their retreat safely.

Nature aided the Tashnakists, by giving them practically inexpugnable strongholds in the land, with ready exits into Persian territory. The great crater of Nimrud, some six miles across, was one of their refuges; and this is paved for

much of its area with a maze of corrugated lava whence no man who knows the runs can be dislodged. Here are also hot springs, just of a temperature to sit in comfortably, in which some of these fellows actually lived for weeks during an Armenian winter, with the thermometer far below zero. They had rigged up an ingenious arrangement, so that they could lie in the water and sleep with their heads above the surface.

Their strangest stronghold, however, was the giant lavaflow of Tendurek. Here either the lava has streamed from great horizontal fissures, or possibly the whole mountain has been blown away by the discharge of an accumulation of energy. Whatever the cause, an area some twenty miles square has been covered with a sea of black lava; which has split and fissured in every direction as it cooled, and now resembles nothing so much as a gigantic black glacier. It is a place where any number of men, and any amount of stores, could lie *perdu* for as long as they wished; for there is an abundant supply of water in the crevasses. One edge of the field is admittedly in Persian territory, and so cannot be policed, even if it were a simple matter to put a cordon round such a place. All the guns of the empire might bombard the stronghold to the crack of doom without inconveniencing its occupants, except by an occasional{250} lucky shot; and the garrison could issue from it at any point to cut up any isolated post. It is an absolutely ideal guerrilla stronghold; for men can move from end to end of it unseen, while every movement of the besieger is conspicuous to them on the bare downs that surround it.

Of course, the game was a superb one for the Tashnakists, or for anyone who enjoys gambling against heavy odds with death as the penalty. For the unhappy Armenian *rayats*, who wanted to be let alone and given a chance to make a living, it was a different story. The revolutionaries wanted to do them good, no doubt; but few

folk really like being done good to. And to like the peculiar Tashnakist method of getting them massacred for the assumed benefit of posterity was impossible for human nature. "We used to have one set of masters, and Allah knows that they were hard enough," was the moan they made; "now we have two, and Allah alone knows which is the harder." The revolutionaries came down on them, and demanded, at the mouth of a pistol, supplies to enable them to fight against the Government. Then they withdrew, and the Government came down on the poor *rayats* in their turn (or in some cases turned the Kurdish irregulars loose upon them), for their crime in "resetting" avowed rebels against the State. How many deaths took place in the summer of 1905 in the Mush district was never known; but the estimates of those who were in a position to know put the numbers at about 5000.

One party of the Fedais, in the course of their retreat to Persian territory entered the city of Van, where their proceedings gave a good instance *in petto*, of their whole *modus operandi*.

Entering the "garden city" by night, they encountered one of the police patrols; and a skirmish resulted, in which a policeman was shot. Of course the troops were called out, and the house in which the rebels had been received was attacked and burnt, after another and sharper skirmish. Still they effected their retreat from it, and were lost to sight for a moment in the walled gardens of the town.

The *Vali* had now to choose. Should he order a strict{251} search for those who were in open war against the Government and had thus outraged his authority? It was in his power to do so, and catch and destroy this band of a dozen men; but it was not in his power to hold the troops if the search, with its attendant street-fighting, once began; and the act spelt massacre for an unknown number of peaceful Armenians. On the other hand, could he allow those rebels to retire uninjured? What would his master the

Sultan say to him if he did? And would the troops, one of whose comrades had been "murdered by these Armenian dogs," obey him if he gave such an order? For twenty-four hours the scales wavered, every foreign house and Consulate being packed with terrified Armenian refugees. While in the Turkish quarter of the town the panic was hardly less, though less conspicuous; for to them every Armenian was a Fedai, and every Fedai had his pockets full of bombs.

The twelve Tashnakists themselves were probably the only people unconcerned; for they had won their game, though they might have to pay the forfeit of their lives, a thing that they had deliberately risked throughout. If they were allowed to withdraw, they had at least flaunted the Government in its provincial capital, and dictated terms to it there. If the attack was made, they could die fighting, and had secured the great "massacre advertisement," for which they had been playing throughout. The fact is that an opponent who is reckless of his own life is very awkward to deal with! All honour is certainly due to the *Vali* (that same Tahir Pasha whom we knew in Mosul later), for he decided that, come what might, he would not order the massacre of those whom he was there to protect. He was able to induce the military commandant to withdraw the troops to barracks, and allow the Tashnakists to effect their retreat. He risked his career to save his subjects from their own friends.

Peace ruled in Van for a year or two after this incident; but the importation of rifles and other revolutionary material continued, and considerable arsenals were accumulated: the Kurds on the frontier being glad enough to earn good{252} pay by asking no questions as to the nature of the loads that passed through their territory. Government was vaguely aware of what was going on, and was uneasy; particularly as an oppressive *Vali* (successor of the shrewd old Tahir) was actually murdered by the

Fedais. As this event took place in Russian territory, when the man was on a journey to Constantinople, no local disturbance was caused by it.

The acting *Vali* who took his place, one Ali Riza, was quietly at work in his house one night in February 1908, when he was informed that an Armenian insisted on seeing him on some important business, which he would disclose to no underling. After some demur he was admitted, and came to the point at once. "See here, *Vali* Pasha. My name is David; and I am come to tell you that I am one of the 'inner ring' of the Tashnakist society. For reasons of my own, I mean to disclose everything that I know to the Government. Give me a band of men now, and I will take them this very night to the house where the rest of the 'ring' are to assemble; and to-morrow, I will show you the depôts of rifles and cartridges."

The motive for this act of exceptionally black treachery was, of course, some quarrel with his comrades. Several versions of this, all coherent enough, but all contradictory, circulated in the town during the next few days; the most probable being the obvious one that he and his chief (the man was second in command of the Van organization) had both fallen in love with the same girl. Most agreed, however, that David had somehow become aware that sentence of death had been passed on him by "the circle"; and hence had declared, "then I will at least have my revenge beforehand."

Will it be believed that the *Vali* was either too fearful, or too stupid, to rise to this opportunity? He gave orders to keep the man in custody till next day, saying, "then he shall show us the depôts; and if his story is true about the guns, we can proceed to arrest the brigands themselves." All suggestions that the guns could not be removed without some delay, but that the brigands would certainly not continue in that night's meeting-place after the discoveries{253} had begun, were unavailing; and nothing

was done that night. Next day the man redeemed his pledge, and there was rare excitement in Van. Rifles by the hundred were unearthed from various places; and one realized, in watching the searchers, how admirably a mud house lends itself to the making of a *cache*. The earth of Van sets into excellent sun-dried brick (in fact Urartian forts built of it in 800 B.C., remain to this day), and house walls of this material are usually about three feet thick. A hollow large enough to contain a score of rifles can easily be excavated in the middle third of the thickness, and the place built up again. Once let the fresh mud plaster have time to dry, and what tapping or sounding will reveal the hollow that exists behind it? Rifles to the number of nearly 500, half a million cartridges, and some three hundred packets of dynamite, were the spoil of that day.[123]

One must own that the search was conducted as courteously as might be. A large proportion of the cartridges were found in a recess of the wall in the sanctuary of one specially prominent church; but every care was taken not to disturb the adornments of the altar, though irreverent conduct would not have been without excuse just then. Similarly, a young woman found alone in one of the houses that the searchers entered, was not only not molested, but was even allowed to exhaust a most copious vocabulary of abuse on the head of the informer. It was strange to see the Turkish soldiers knocking civilly at doors which could have been sent in by a blow from the butt of a rifle.

The Tashnakists did not part with these cherished treasures without at least a snap. The carts taking the plunder to the citadel were attacked in the street as they left the Armenian quarter; and a very pretty skirmish followed. The combatants took cover in the houses on opposite sides of the road, and fired at one another thence, while the prize of victory lay on the ground between them. With real politeness to the foreigner they selected a battle-

ground{254} under the very windows of the British Consulate, so that that official and his guests enjoyed a most interesting view of the proceedings. As a matter of fact, however, it was not courtesy that dictated the choice, but the desire of the Fedais to have their right flank covered by the Consulate garden, which was necessarily neutral ground. The skirmish lasted for about an hour, during which time about twenty-five men (if you count every scratch) were killed or wounded; and the battle was finally brought to a close by a bullet striking the heap of dynamite that lay exposed in the road. Nobody knew whether this was accident or design; but naturally the blow detonated all that was there, and a magnificent explosion resulted. However, with its usual freakishness, the explosive only excavated a huge pit in the roadway, and did no other harm; not even injuring the overturned cart that lay by it!

Of course the Tashnakists vowed vengeance on David, who was made a sort of hero by the Turks, and granted a liberal pension; perhaps with the feeling that he was not likely to draw it for long. Various Mussulman officials declared openly that if he should be attacked, they would exact a hundred lives for his; and it is believed that the principal Tashnakists, hearing of this, ordered that no step should be taken against him. However, they were unable to control their followers; and after an interval of about six weeks, David was shot down in the street by a lad named Tirlamazian, and died a few days later. The assassin escaped for a time.

The Turks kept their word: for something over 100 Armenians (mostly honest shopkeepers returning from the market) were butchered at once by the "black-heads" (*kara-bashlar*, the low class civilian population).[124] Again it appeared that the troops, assisted by the Mussulman populace, would break into the Armenian quarters of the town, and that a most hideous massacre

would follow. Both sides stood to arms, and for a matter of five weeks the tension was very great; hardly any Armenians venturing{255} to leave their quarters. On the other hand, the Turks had just as much fear of entering there, for the position was eminently defensible. The houses of the garden city were too solidly built to be much damaged by field artillery (which was all that was available); and standing as they do for the most part in large gardens surrounded by mud walls, there was a distinct possibility that the troops (if they entered the quarter at all) might be very seriously entangled in them. Further, all the Turkish and Kurdish forces had a very lively respect for the prowess of the Tashnakists, and an exaggerated idea of their numbers.

So the position continued; an anomaly that surely would be possible only in Turkey. A force of armed rebels standing at bay in one ward of the scattered town, and defying the Government in the other. While all the time (for men must eat and Armenians must trade) business was conducted pretty much as usual in the market of *Hach Poghan*, which stood conveniently on neutral ground at the edge of the two districts. The foreign Consuls, by the way, had insisted that food should not be cut off from the Armenian quarter, on proper payment for it!

Even in Turkey such a position could not continue indefinitely. As soon as a sufficient body of troops, regular and irregular, had been accumulated, and resistance was manifestly hopeless, the Armenian quarter was formally occupied, and regular search made for arms and revolutionaries. Many of the former were found and confiscated; and the twelve members of the "ring" endeavoured to effect their escape from the town. But this they now found impossible. After some searching, their place of concealment was disclosed; and they were marked to ground in one of the *kerezes* or subterranean channels that bring water from the mountains to the town.

These *kerezes* are made by sinking pits at intervals of about fifty yards, to a depth of about thirty feet, and tunnelling from one to the other. Many of them date back to the Urartian period of history. In this case, the troops were able to ascertain that the objects of their search were probably in a certain length of channel; but it was{256} difficult to devise any means of making sure, or of getting them out. One soldier, however, volunteered to be lowered down alone to investigate; a plucky act, for it entailed something like a descent into the den of wolves at bay. Down he went; and discovered that they had selected exactly the right one of the series of pits, for he was lowered into the very midst of the gang of Fedais. They seized him, of course, and were about to kill him, when he got his word in first. "Look here, you can kill me of course, but what good will it do you? When I do not come out, my officer will know that you are here, and you can just be smoked out like jackals. Your game is up, and you had better surrender to me."

Well, the position was hopeless; and possibly eight and forty hours in a dark drain, sitting cramped together with your feet in cold water, and the prospect of slow suffocation to follow, has a damping effect on the courage of the bravest. Anyhow, these twelve men, maugre their vow never to surrender under any circumstances, did surrender to the one; and the soldier had the well-earned satisfaction of sending each of the party up in turn, in the bight of a rope, to where his comrades were waiting for them above ground. They were taken to the town prison, of course, and confined there.

Grim tales are told of torture in such places, when it is needful to extract information from the prisoner; and deprival of sleep and hammering the finger-ends are the reported methods. Still, nothing of the kind was inflicted on these men (save that one of them, the lad Tirlamazian, was flogged), though it was of course known that they had

a good deal of important information to give. During their stay in Van jail, they had nothing worse than most uncomfortable detention to complain of; though confinement in a foul cell, swarming with vermin, may become a very fair imitation of torture after a few hours, particularly if the prisoner is chained so that he cannot scratch!

Orders were sent, we believe, for the forwarding of at least the chief of the Tashnakists, Aram, to Constantinople, under strong guard. Once in the clutches of Abdul Hamid{257} his fate would have been a grim one indeed. But before the decree was executed, a marvellous transformation took place. This was nothing less than the Turkish Revolution of 1908, with its consequent amnesty for all political offences. All proceedings were dropped, and the prisoners emerged to be greeted as national heroes after their confinement.



CHURCH OF MAR SHALITHA, QUDSHANIS.

The larger arch opens into the Sanctuary, the veil of which is never withdrawn except for the celebı into the Sacristy, where is also the font. Ex voto offerings of aromatic herbs hang from the tie beams; and

cruciform loophole at the west end, so that the interior is almost pitch dark.

Very soon, however, the real problem of the relations of the Armenian and Ottoman began to come up again in a slightly different form.

The Young Turk ideal was an Ottoman Empire; with equal rights no doubt for all who were content to become Ottomans, but Ottomanization for all. The Tashnakists (who kept up their organization, observing, in answer to all protests, that it was as necessary for them as was that of the Committee of Union and Progress for others) were Armenians first and foremost; and further were anxious to set about the immediate realization of a programme that was wildly Radical, not to say Socialistic, in its objects. Confiscation of all landed property; disendowment and disestablishment of the Church;[125] universal suffrage (which was to include female suffrage by the way), and the abolition of all religious teaching in schools, were some of the planks of their "platform." All authority, save that of the nation, was disowned; even a parent was not to exercise any power over his son. In fact all the reforms that even a Socialist admits must come in gradually in the West, were to be administered *en bloc* to an astonished East.

Even a schoolmaster's authority was declared anathema according to the modern dogmas, and attempts were made to act on this hopeful doctrine. Thus, a certain missionary in the town forbade his Armenian pupils to smuggle revolvers,{258} and other contraband dear to the heart of every boy, into the school premises. Having reason to suspect that the command had been disobeyed, he began a search in the boys' boxes; but while in the stooping attitude necessary for the purpose, he was vehemently assaulted *a posteriori* with hat-pins by his pupils, and was solemnly forbidden by the Tashnakists either to cane or to expel those guilty of this *lèse-majesté*. The first

punishment was derogatory to the dignity of the young rascals as free-born Armenian citizens; the second deprived them of their natural Right to a good education. Further, it was solemnly argued, "if we do not send our boys to your school what will become of you? The funds have been subscribed by the friends of Armenia for our teaching, not for your livelihood." To manage a school under these conditions was obviously difficult; and to quote John Dryden, "the sons of Belial had a glorious time." But at last the absurdity of the *impasse* forced even the Tashnakists to be a little more reasonable.

"We work for those who come a hundred and fifty years hence," said Aram proudly to the *Vali*.

"Leave that to Allah," said the more practically minded Turk, "and help us Turks to work for to-morrow."

"Well you see, I do not believe in Allah," said the Armenian; who, like most of these Fedais, had been so highly educated that it was impossible for him to believe that any power could have made so supreme a *chef d'œuvre* as his magnificent self.

"What? Won't He recognize your importance?" said the Turk shrewdly; after which it was not wonderful that they did not part on too friendly a footing.

However, the Tashnakists soon found that the attachment of their countrymen to the old church that had kept their nation alive through the centuries, was so strong that some outward deference must be paid to it. Therefore, on the principle that it is well to do thoroughly that which you have to do, Aram became a Sunday-school teacher! The spectacle of this atheistic revolutionary (who had deliberately planned, and executed, murders by the dozen; and was{259} indirectly responsible for heaven alone knew how much bloodshed besides), solemnly teaching little girls their Catechism, was at least striking, if not particularly edifying.

Time went on; and gradually, the utter failure of the effort of the "Young Turks" to effect the regeneration of their country became manifest. The handicap against them was cruelly heavy. They were themselves without experience in working that great crazy combination of makeshifts which men call the Ottoman Government. Yet kept going it must be; and the only men who had the requisite knowledge were just that clique of unspeakably corrupt officials whom it would have been the first duty of any good Government to clear away. Further, while the great mass of the subjects of the Sultan, of whatever creed; are easily governed folk enough, and obey any order that the *Hukumet* gives, within certain limits; yet everywhere in each one of the varied nations there was a small, noisy and irreconcilable minority—sets of men who could work neither with the Government nor with one another.

There was the blind, fanatical opposition of the mollahs, and those Mussulmans whom they influenced. There were the self-styled leaders of each separate Christian nation; who usually misrepresented the inarticulate *rayats* most woefully, and were clamouring for the immediate introduction of "reforms," that would have provoked a conservative reaction in France or America. And, moreover, there were very many others of the type that prefers troubled waters, because they are the best to fish in. Further, the Young Turks were themselves theorizers, and theory ridden. Ottomans and secularists, who wished to Ottomanize every one and to disregard religion; and did not realize how much the twin principles of religion and nationality went for in the land they wished to govern.

Thus they brought upon themselves a needless Albanian revolt, and saw much of their prestige vanish in it. They outraged the prejudices of every conservative Mussulman by their open disregard of such an institution as Ramazan. They offended the very Christians whom they were trying to benefit, by the proposal to remove all the distinctive{260}

privileges of each *millet*, and make them all Ottoman subjects and citizens alike. The effect was to make them all as wrathful as the thief who found that he was not to be honoured with a higher gallows than his companions.

Had time been given them, and had the army continued to back them, things might have gone well; for no European proverb holds in Turkey, and there it is not the case that "you can do anything with bayonets except sit on them." Bayonets enough make a very comfortable seat for the Government, or seem to do so. Still, time was not given; and two disastrous wars have not left much of the prestige that is the breath of life to an Oriental Government.

The Turk has the misfortune to be an anachronism in power. His present methods were those of every European Government some five hundred years ago; but European consciences have developed in the interval, and his has not. Modern civilization, though willing enough to shut its eyes to a good deal that is ugly, cannot avoid seeing what the Turk does. He happens to occupy lands which must attract the religious and antiquarian interest of the world, and which are the nearest unexploited field for European capital besides. He is then, and must be, in the limelight. Still, you cannot do in the limelight what sentiment will allow you to do in the dark; and the trouble is, that the Turk knows no other way of doing his business than the habits he learnt when everything was dark. You can give an old dog a new collar, but you cannot teach him new tricks; and even calling the Government of Turkey "constitutional," has not altered its methods. Bribery is more costly now than under the old regime, in that you have to insure against risk; but it is not less prevalent: and the Turk has been given an excellent additional reason for disregarding the advice of foreign Consuls; for what *locus standi* have they in a Civilized and Constitutional country like the Ottoman Empire? These facts appear to a

European resident to be the two principal results of the "new régime" after five years. What can Dame Europe say or do to the grim old mastiff, who can still bite enough to make her very nervous about handling him, and who{261} says "What my enemies have left me of the kennel is mine; and while it remains mine I will manage it as I like."

Note. It is one of the consolations of life in Turkey that the more tragically serious a thing is in reality, the more certain it is to present a comic aspect in practice.

A good instance of this was provided for the foreigner in Van, shortly after the proclamation of the Constitution in that city.

The position of women in the East is a great and important question enough, in all conscience; and on its right solution depends probably the future of those lands; yet the problem presented itself in Van in the guise of a battle between old and young which had all the elements of absurdity in it.

A caravan load of what professed to be the latest Paris fashion in hats arrived at Van; and the younger female population (who had been previously obliged to veil themselves for several reasons) took to the innovation very kindly. They discovered, however, that by doing so they had roused the wrath of conservative mamma, and of even more conservative grandmamma, who declared that "nobody will ever marry you if you go about with your face naked in that fashion."

As a matter of fact, the Armenian Pyramus had no more objection to looking on Thisbe's uncovered face than has his European cousin. The real objection lay deeper. Hitherto marriages have been arranged, as is right and proper, between the mothers and grandmothers on each side; and the bridegroom never sees his bride till the knot has been tied. If, however, damsels took to going about "with their faces naked in that fashion," there obviously might be difficulties in getting the consent of the young man to the marriage arranged by his seniors; and it was even possible that young people might take to settling things between themselves. In this case, the rule of grandmamma over the house totters to its very foundations—which is a catastrophe too terrible to be contemplated for an instant. Hence *obsta principiis* was the order, and the hats were confiscated. Picture the feelings of those scores of damsels who, having acquired European hats for the first time, found themselves deprived of them; and condemned—not to a transparent veil or becoming *mantilla*—but to a thick knitted shawl drawn over the face whenever there was a male animal about.

Conservatism triumphed on this occasion; but had the new régime been a success, we fancy that feminine youth would have put up a better fight for it. As things were, the old conditions persisted, which had made it none too safe for any young girl to allow her face to be seen in the streets; and they gave way. No doubt the battle will be renewed at a later date, and possibly with better fortune!

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CHAPTER XIII

THE LAND OF PRESTER JOHN

(QUDSHANIS)

MOST of us have some recollection of the legend of "Prester John," particularly in the version given in "Ariosto"; the legend of a Christian king ruling his people in the midst of infidels; a king who was yet a priest and who celebrated Mass regularly; who had a kingdom in the midst of wild inaccessible mountains, girdled by cloud and storm; and who was tormented by the harpies that came daily and snatched the food from his table. We read, too, how he was visited by the wandering English knight Astolpho, and how that hero drove away the harpies by the blast of his magic horn.

It sounds a staggering statement to make, but it is nevertheless the truth, that all these stories told by the Italian poet as legends current in his day, are literally the fact in all essentials (or were so until very lately), with the Patriarch of the Nestorians in Kurdistan. He is the "Bishop-Prince" of a mountain kingdom of Christians; subject to the Sultan of course, but still a recognized ruler, and ruler by virtue of his Episcopal rank. Even the mountains over which the hippogrif bore Astolpho were hardly more inaccessible than those which girdle the village of Qudshanis; while a very good imitation of the

harpies that tormented Prester John are found in the Kurds that ravage the land. English visitors are there too, as members of what is known as the "Archbishop's Assyrian Mission;"[126] though they, alas, have no magic horn with which to drive away the harpies of to-day.{263}

If, however, the old magical power has gone, some prestige attaches to the name of the English still; for villages where they reside are not raided when all others suffer, for fear that some evil may thereafter befall the thief. The writer once spent a night in a little village of Nestorians in this immediate district, called Shwawutha; a village whose little rock-built church is shown in one of our illustrations. Hospitality was given him there, as a matter of course; but in the middle of the night he was roused by a Dutch concert of the most pronounced description. Men shouted, women screamed, cattle bellowed, and sheep bleated; while a shot or so told that something warlike was afoot. And soon folk came rushing in to tell him that the Kurds had descended on the village, and were engaged at that moment in turning it inside out.

Sure enough, when he emerged in somewhat sketchy toilet, he found himself in the midst of some five and twenty well armed ruffians. Most of them were gathered on the threshing-floors, and threatening the villagers with their rifles; while the rest were coolly rounding up the sheep for the purpose of driving them away. Deponent had some talk with their leader, carefully introducing himself as an Englishman, and laying stress on the fact that he was going down from that village to the seat of government, to interview the *Vali* and the British Consul. And presently the robber excused himself for a moment and gave an order in Kurdish, which was not understood by his interlocutor, but which resulted in his men allowing the sheep to remain in their folds. He then turned round and explained with all politeness that he and his young men were on a peaceful journey, and desired to be the guests of

the village for the rest of that night. Would the *Effendi* use his influence with the headman to get him to extend hospitality to them? He tactfully ignored the fact that you do not usually occupy a village with an armed force at two in the morning as a preliminary to asking to be received as a guest!

The *Effendi* told the headman that he had better let it go at that, lest worse should befall him; for naturally he{264} had no means whatever of controlling these fellows if they should break loose. A meal was hurriedly prepared for all the gang, and he sat with their chief till unholy hours that night, or morning, exchanging yarns. Eventually he had the satisfaction of seeing the marauders depart at daybreak. No harm had been done to the place; though had it not been for the "accident" of the presence of an Englishman, there would have been a different tale to tell.

The village of Qudshanis, which is the residence of the Nestorian or Assyrian Patriarch, "Mar Shimun," and the headquarters of his Church, has a marvellous situation. It lies on a sloping "alp" of rugged pasture, between two mountain torrents which spring from the towering snow-fields to the west of it; and which descend in gradually deepening gorges, enclosing the tongue-shaped plateau on which the village stands. They meet beneath the point of the tongue at the base of a lofty wedge of rock; and thence the united stream flows on, joined by others on its way, till it falls into the Zab some two hours below the village. Nestorian tradition regards the Zab as the Pison, one of the four rivers of Paradise; and the Patriarch will occasionally date his official letters "from my cell on the River of the Garden of Eden."

The official title of the Church, whose principal bishop resides in this romantic, but singularly inaccessible, spot is "the Church of the East." This title was given to it originally by those whom we call "the Eastern Christians," viz. those of Constantinople and Antioch; and by it they

meant the Church to the east of them, beyond the frontier of the Roman Empire, in what was then the kingdom of the Sassanid Persians. In the days of its greatness, this communion extended itself marvellously, in just those countries where Christianity finds it hardest to establish a footing now. In the year 1300 its bishops were distributed from Damascus to Pekin, and from Tartary to Malabar. The "Syrian Christians" of the latter land, though they now own a different jurisdiction, still remain as a memorial of its missionary zeal in the fifth century; and the Singan monument in the very heart of China tells of the presence{265} of this "pacific, philosophical, and excellent religion" there also, and commemorates the names of sundry of its bishops and clergy. Nay, the historic Prester John (for he was an historical figure strange to say) was of this Church. A dynasty of Tartar princes of the eleventh century were Christians; and the name of their founder, Ung Khan, readily became Yukhanan, which is John, in Syriac-speaking mouths. Whether he ever was, as a matter of fact, an ordained presbyter is more questionable.

Massacre (particularly the tremendous massacres of Tamerlane about the year 1400), oppression, and the proselytism of better protected and educated bodies, have reduced this Church now to a few wild tribes of mountaineers living in a most inaccessible country; and to a fringe of *rayat* villages, many of whom are little better than serfs to the Kurds near whom they live. Yet the Church still exists, guarding its independence and its ancient rites, and boasting with legitimate pride that it, alone of all peoples, still uses in daily life the language that our Lord spoke on earth. Whether the dialects of vernacular Syriac that are here in use would have been intelligible in Palestine in the first century of this era, may be doubted; but the statement is so far true, that the language is unquestionably a variant of the Aramaic referred to.

As this Church is a survival of so much that is ancient and that has passed away from other lands, it is appropriate that here alone in all the world, the "temporal power of the Church" should still survive. It is little more than a shadow now, but not a dead thing yet. Mar Shimun holds the village of Qudshanis, and the lands that belong to it, by grant from the Sultan; and until lately every inhabitant of the place was in the happy condition of paying neither rent, rates, nor taxes to anyone. Unfortunately the grant was a merely verbal one, made in the days when you did not ask your king to sign papers from fear that he would "play the Jew" and go back from his given word, and when the evidence of the "grey-beards" of a place was enough to prove a fact. Now there is a new rule in the land, the rule of forms and pens and ink and paper;{266} and this new régime has not recognized the old right. A harmless and picturesque survival has gone; taken away in the interests of civilization and uniformity, by the same people who were so desirous of substituting a Parisian boulevard for the Roman walls of Constantinople, and for the same reason.

One other feature of the old rights remains—besides the fact that the peacock, the bird of royalty, still walks the patriarchal terrace.[127] The wild Christian tribes of Hakkiari, whither no Government of any sort has ever extended, still pay tribute to their Patriarch for transmission to the Sultan; and not taxes through the tax-collector, like the rest. This, again, is based on custom only, and if it were challenged (as it will be ere long), the tribes could show no document acknowledging their right; for it simply arose from the fact that the Ottoman Government was not disposed, or able, to enforce their government practically in this wild district. It was easier to give the Patriarch, whom the tribesmen did reverence, a few decorations and a small salary, and to set him to collect such tribute as he could get the tribesmen to pay. It

was an acknowledgment of jurisdiction that could be made more effective if ever the opportunity should offer.

Westerns, accustomed to correct Western notions of managing Church and State, hear with a shock that the patriarchate of this ancient church is hereditary in one family; as indeed is the case also with almost all its bishoprics. Bishops do not marry (though other clergy are free to do so at their will), so the office cannot go from father to son. It does go, however, from uncle to nephew, and so keeps in the "Episcopal house".

It is a strange custom; yet it is not so long since it prevailed in at least one part of Europe; for fifty years ago it was the established order of things in Montenegro. We believe that it was the father of the present King Nicholas who first refused to be consecrated bishop, and to refrain{267} from marriage, when he acceded to the hereditary chieftainship of the "Black Mountain;" though all his predecessors had done so before him. If the custom went on so long in Europe, one need not wonder overmuch if it still prevails under similar circumstances in a remoter land.

The fact is, that among Christians who are still in the wild tribal stage of evolution, the Episcopate is much too important a thing in the tribe to be allowed out of the House of the Chief. Further, the idea of hereditary high priesthood, or family sanctity at any rate, is thoroughly congruous to Oriental thought. Among the Kurds, Sheikhship, which is hereditary religious chieftainship, is a common thing enough; and the Aaronic high-priesthood is at least a respectable precedent to refer to! Perhaps the Patriarch's own statement of the case, as made to the writer, gives as good a defence for the custom as can be made. "Of course, we know that this *Natar-cursiya* system" (the Syriac name for the habit) "is as thoroughly against primitive practice and our own canons as a thing can well be. Tell me though, you who know our people

and circumstances, what other way is open to us? Free election by our wild tribesmen? That means a free fight every vacancy. Nomination by the Turkish Government? If we were lucky, we might get some feeble old monk, who had done no harm to anyone, and never would do any good. We should be much more likely, however, to get some supple blackguard, who asked for a bishopric as his pay for some dirty job done for a Turkish *Vali*. So we have dropped into this hereditary system; and we think that we have as good a chance of a good bishop as others have of a good king." Really the writer had no reply to make; and could only feel thankful that his Holiness had not the knowledge that would have enabled him to continue, "and you know, however uncanonical and unprimitive it is, it cannot well be more so than nomination by a lay Prime Minister. You maintain that custom because it works fairly well. So do we."

One result of an hereditary Episcopate is that the bishop is often absurdly young in years. The present holder of the Patriarchate is of the mature age of twenty-three, and{268} is in the ninth year of his consecration! That a lad of that age (though admittedly maturity comes quickly in the East) should take himself very seriously as an Archbishop, is too much to be expected. Still he does take himself very seriously as the responsible Head of his nation; as the one to whom all have the right to turn in their need, and who is bound to help them to the limits of his power. Long ago, a poet in this land sketched what an ideal king should be; and the main feature of his portrait was that such an one should "preserve the souls of the poor," "delivering the poor when he crieth" and counting "their blood dear in his sight." That is still the ideal of kingship in this land; and this lad (to his credit be it said) has loyally endeavoured to live up to it. It would have been easy for Mar Shimun to make comfortable terms for his House and himself, had he been content to leave his people to look after their own

interests. On the contrary, he has habitually sacrificed his own ease and comfort; and has run serious risks again and again, in order that he may try to protect "the sheep whom God has committed to him" either from Kurdish raider, or from the worse oppression of the Ottoman minor official. The Eastern ruler who rules for his people is a rare phenomenon and a high character.

An instance or two of the sort of work this young man has to do, and the spirit in which he undertakes it, will give some idea of the conditions of his life. The writer has known a case, where an important mountain chief brought up an unworthy candidate for priest's orders, only a few weeks after the lad had himself been consecrated as Patriarch. The request was met with the silence which in the East means refusal. It was repeated more urgently, to be met again by a quiet but decided negative.

"But the man is your own cousin my Lord!" said the astonished chief; "how can you refuse this to him?"

"*Malik*" (*i.e.*, "chief") came the answer, delivered without either swagger or fear, "the whole *millet* is equally 'the cousin' of its Patriarch."

On another occasion, he had to undertake a piece of work most eminently episcopal in character, but hardly usual in{269} the West, viz. the reconciliation of a feud between a Kurdish and a Christian tribe.

Preliminaries were arranged by him between the two chiefs; and it was finally agreed that twenty "leading men" from each sept should meet with Mar Shimun in a certain valley, where the last points could be settled at a personal interview, and peace formally made. The Patriarch was prepared, of course, for the fact that every delegate came fully armed; but he had not quite expected that each one of the forty should think it needful for his dignity to come like Vich Ian Vohr, "with his tail on," accompanied that is by four or five followers, all also armed! Further, each side

(as was discovered later) had provided an ambush in a convenient place, so as not to be taken unawares in the event of treachery on the part of the other.

Walking with naked lights in a powder magazine was a safe business compared to that conference; and the Patriarch, having got his parties in two villages, divided by a stream, spent most of the day going to and fro between them, arranging the final details. All was settled at last; and "Now," said the Patriarch, "leave your guns here in the shade, and come down to the stream and shake hands."

They came as ordered, without their guns. But it was observed that every man of the forty came down with his right hand on the hilt of his dagger; and when he had to take it away in order to grasp the hand of his opposite number, he put his left hand there instead! However, all passed off well; though the Armenian servant who handed round the coffee that formed the ceremonial hospitality which all had to share, trembled so violently that he upset the cups! For a moment it was a question whether this would be taken as a joke or a bad omen. Then luckily somebody laughed; and a general guffaw saved the situation.

When all were talking in friendly wise, and chaffing one another over the episodes of the feud, it was discovered that each party had brought down its local lunatic to provide amusement for them during the hours of waiting. Some one with a sporting soul suggested forming a ring, {270} and putting up a cock-fight between these two unfortunates. Mar Shimun did his best to dissuade them; having a well-grounded fear that if the two came to blows, each man of the forty would take sides with his own idiot, and that the whole feud would be re-opened with a particularly sanguinary fight. However, to his relief, though to the disappointment of others, the lunatics showed themselves possessed of more sense than any of their companions. Each was provided with a thick stick,

and told that the other had insulted all his ancestry; but they fell to talk before proceeding to "lay on load;" and got on together so well that they spent the rest of that day in friendly converse. When they finally parted, each declared that the other was the most sensible man and the best company that he had met in all his life.

In all his work, both spiritual and political, Mar Shimun has had two helpers, one of whom is with him still. This is his sister Surma, "Lady Surma of the house of Mar Shimun;" a singularly cultivated and high-minded woman. She has been thoroughly well educated (*e.g.* she speaks English well, and is well read in such authors as Scott, Stevenson and C. M. Yonge, besides English devotional theology), she yet remains a thorough Oriental, and a devoted member of her own Church. She is a recognized authority in all the rites and services,[128] and the trusted adviser of her brother (whose senior she is by a couple of years) in all the work of his office. Lady Surma is a professed nun (*rabbanta*) of the Nestorian Church; but this does not imply a cloistered life, for monasticism in this land has developed in a very peculiar fashion. The monasteries and nunneries have practically all perished, though their endowments (or some of them) are still recognized as Church property; but monks and nuns—*rabbans* and *rabbantas*, still continue. Those who feel the "call to the religious life" follow it in their own families; living unmarried, abstaining from meat, and devoting themselves{271} to good works and the services of the church. They maintain themselves by their own labour, and (with the exceptions mentioned) follow no special rule. If they marry, for instance, they have departed from a high purpose, but have broken no solemn vow. Rather strangely, the system has thus fallen back to something very like what "the virginal life" was in the early days of the Church, before monastic rules were formulated. This has come about without the knowledge or intent of its

present professors; but the parallel with the conditions of *e.g.* third century Africa is amazingly close.[129]

As bishop, Mar Shimun is of course a *rabban* also, and as such eats no meat. This, however, implies no great hardship in Qudshanis, where indeed the visitor may be recommended to consult his own comfort by following the same rule; for meat is both hard to come by and seldom good to eat.[130] The course of generations, however, has evolved quite a number of good vegetarian recipes, not indeed for the patriarchal table, for there is none, but for the patriarchal tray!

Mar Shimun's other counsellor was an Englishman of most exceptional character; the late Doctor William Browne, of the "Archbishop's Mission;" who for twenty-five years lived in this remote village as adviser and friend of this Church, and of two successive Patriarchs in it. In spirit a devoted fifth-century hermit, who somehow was born in nineteenth-century England, he applied himself whole-heartedly to the care of the Nestorian Church and its members, as their teacher, healer, and at times rebuker. He lived their life with them, and now sleeps in their midst. Many of the memories of one of the most picturesque and{272} romantic of modern lives were lost irrevocably at his accidental death in 1910; but one or two which the writer received from him are worth inserting, as throwing light both on the conditions under which he lived, and on the character of the man himself.

In January and February of the year 1900, the news of the "Black Week" in South Africa in the previous December filtered slowly through the glens of Kurdistan. Mr. Browne (as he then was) was in his room in the village of Qudshanis, when two visitors were announced; deacons of the Church both, and good friends of their host. In they came, appearing fully armed and equipped for a journey.

"Peace be to you, deacons," said the Englishman, "Are you going on a journey at this season?"

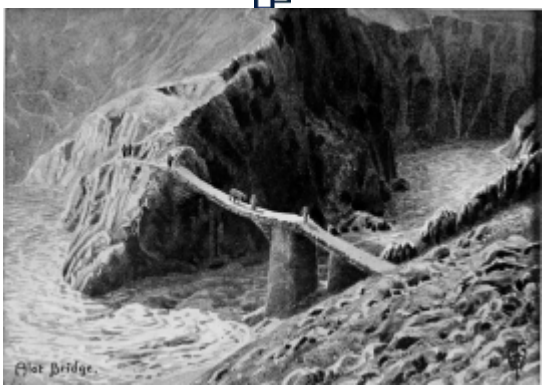
"Upon you be peace Rabbi," came the answer; "Could you tell us the way to South Africa?"

"To South Africa? Why on earth do you want to go there?"

"Well, Rabbi, we owe a good deal to you English; it seems from what we hear that you fellows don't understand fighting behind rocks. Now we do know *that* here in Hakkiari if we know nothing else, and we thought we ought to go and help."

They would certainly have been a picturesque reinforcement for Lord Roberts; but it came out on inquiry that there really was no way of getting to Africa without crossing the ocean, a prospect far more dreadful than battling with any number of Boers; and so the volunteers returned regretfully to their homes.

The "debt which they owed to the English," by the way, was principally the service rendered to their nation by Stratford Canning in 1847; when he insisted on the restoration of the children stolen as slaves by the Kurds under Bedr Khan Beg, the Mira of Bohtan, who perpetrated a fearful massacre of these mountaineers in that year. The return of those who had been given up as dead (and who were brought back in some cases from Aleppo and Smyrna) made a deep impression on the people, and has never been forgotten since.{273}

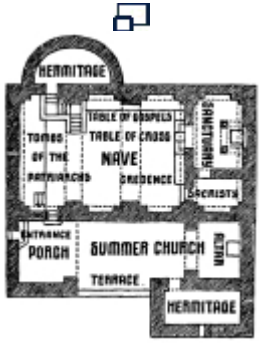


A MOUNTAIN BRIDGE.
A characteristic example near the village of Alot on the Lesser Zab.

No. 12

On another occasion, a worthy old *qasha*, or priest, *Qasha* Tuma by name, better known for his straight shooting than for his learning, turned up to interview Mr. Browne; assured him of his attachment to the English, and asked if there was nothing he could do to serve him.

"Certainly, *Qasha*," said the Englishman; "gather the boys of your village and teach a school; I will find you books enough."



QUDSHANIS
CHURCH OF MAR SHALITHA

"Nay Rabbi, that is quite beyond me. It is as much as I can do to read the services. But, if there was anyone whom you wished shot now, I should be delighted to undertake the job!"

Mar Shimun is accustomed to think of himself rather as Chief of his nation than as Patriarch of its Church (or to be accurate, not to separate those two offices in his mind);{274} but it is as Patriarch notwithstanding that he appeals to the imagination of outsiders—Patriarch of one of the most interesting and picturesque Churches in the world. We give a picture of his Cathedral, which like most of the mountain shrines is very small in size, and resembles a border "peel-tower" rather than a church of the type we are accustomed to.[131] Orientals are not troubled with any desire for pews and either stand through the service, or kneel or sit upon the floor during the Lessons and sermon, and thus a very small nave will accommodate a very fair congregation. Though the Church of Mar Shalitha at Qudshanis measures at the most a scant thirty feet square, we have seen a congregation of about 400 accommodated in it; and that without more crowding than was advisable to keep people warm before the dawning of a Kurdistan winter's day. Once only, we may mention, have the Christmas day services been postponed till after sunrise; and that was on an occasion when a wild snowstorm, of the sort known by the expressive name of the "white darkness," made it a physical impossibility for any person to win his way over the 200 yards that divide the church from the village.

Internally the church is divided into nave and sanctuary; the latter being partitioned off by a fairly solid wall, and raised on three steps above the nave level. Outside the sanctuary door two solid "tables" of masonry carry the book of the Gospels, and the Cross which is kissed by every person who enters the building. Curtains and small votive offerings form the decorations, the latter being chiefly bunches of aromatic herbs, which are suspended

from the tie beams; but in these matters the Nestorian is of more than evangelical severity, and will allow no picture, far less any image, to be brought into the church. Even a stained glass window would excite his prejudice, if it contained any figures; a fact which is no doubt due to his desire{275} to escape any reproach of "idolatry" from his Mohammedan neighbours.[132]

The Liturgy of this Church is one of the oldest used in any part of Christendom; for it is practically certain that it existed in something like its present form by the year 450, and tradition ascribes it to an even earlier date. However, in a land where all services were until very lately manuscript and not printed, a certain amount of "fluidity" is natural; and indeed at certain services anyone who will bring an anthem of his own composition is entitled to have it chanted!

Evening celebrations of the Eucharist (*Qurbana* is the Syriac name for the Rite) are customary on the vigils of the greater festivals; and these are performed in a way that suggests a possible and most beneficial concordat on that disputed point between the "high" and "low" divisions of the Church of England, for all who attend the evening celebration in the Nestorian Church do so fasting!

That so ancient a Church as this isolated body should have certain rites peculiar to itself, in addition to those that are variants of services common to all Christendom, is of course to be expected; and every Nestorian attaches great importance to what is known among them as the "Succession of the Leaven." Like all Orientals they celebrate the Eucharist with leavened bread,[133] and a certain amount of this is reserved after each "*Qurbana*" for one purpose, and one only. That purpose is neither communion of the sick, nor adoration; but the leavening of the dough that is to be baked for the next celebration. That baking of the bread, as is general with Orientals, is performed by the priest himself, and in the sacristy of the

church, at a special preliminary office; and the admixture of the reserved crumbs at once leavens it, and puts it "into connexion" with that used on the previous occasion. And so they hold it is put "into connexion" with that used at all previous celebrations also, back to the institution in the{276} upper room at Jerusalem. As a matter of history, the fact can be of course neither proved nor disproved. As a piece of instructive and interesting ceremonial, we imagine that at the least nobody could object to it; while many would envy such a possession.

It is at the patriarchal *diwan* that the real life of Qudshanis finds its centre. At this solemn gathering, which is held daily in the course of the afternoon, anyone may be present; and anyone may bring forward any conceivable business that he wishes to have discussed in public. Coffee and tobacco go round, and for picturesqueness the gathering is hard to beat. It is composed mostly of mountaineers who look as if they had stepped down from the Assyrian sculptures, clad in loose home-spun coats and trousers, gay cummerbunds that are wrapped round and round their waists, and high felt caps that have been their headgear since time immemorial. Below these hang the long, plaited pigtails that form the traditional arrangement of their long hair. A bishop, or so, in long dark robes, serves as a foil to the many coloured dresses of the men of Tyari and Tkhuma; and the wonderfully handsome face of the young Patriarch (for good looks are part of the inheritance of the men of his family) forms a centre to the whole. He has himself unfortunately departed from the tradition of his fathers, and wears semi-European dress, which is seldom becoming to the Asiatic. Any visitor at Qudshanis is expected to attend the reception; and indeed to be in the place and not to be sometimes at the *diwan* of the Patriarch is a marked act of discourtesy and almost a proclamation of disloyalty. As far as the writer can make out, something the same line of thought governs the

Oriental attendance at the services of his church. In attending the *Qurbana*, he is attending the *diwan* of that Great Power to whom he certainly does not intend to be openly disloyal.

Absolutely any business may be discussed, or any subject brought forward at these gatherings. Who is to be *malik* of such and such a district; what villages stand in need of clergy; what terms of agreement can be suggested for the settlement of some grazing dispute. And though these{277} questions may be settled *in camera*, the meanest man has his chance of making his opinion heard. If there is no special business to talk over, other subjects crop up; and a good fund of general information is a desirable possession for any Englishman who may be present, for strange questions are put before his wisdom. Thus, he may be asked why it is the case that some wild animals take so much more killing than do others; or invited to pass an opinion as to whether it is really the fact that shooting stars are the javelins cast by the Seraphim at the Jann, when they see them come up from earth to the lower courts of heaven for the purposes of eavesdropping. Once, a worthy old priest started the problem whether the angels kept the Fasts of the Church; and this was discussed with much learning and in true scholastic style. The theory propounded that they could hardly fast because they did not eat was scouted on the authority of the text, "Man did eat angels' food;" this proving that they certainly ate something! "Then they eat but do not fast" said some; but that seemed unlikely, for of all sorts of men known to these present, whether Christian, Mussulman, Jew or Devil-worshipper, the only folk who did not fast in some way were the American Missionaries, and there was a general feeling that this was not quite a conclusive precedent![134] Finally the meeting somehow hammered out the very sensible conclusion that laws{278} made for fallen creatures like man did not necessarily bind unfallen beings; and the

matter was left at that.

Occasionally some queer anecdote is related by one of the visitors; and one of these sticks in our memory as exemplifying the exceeding toughness and callousness of the Kurd. A gentleman of that race was riding his mule along one of the mountain paths when he was caught by an avalanche, which carried him down some distance, and then (in the sportive way that avalanches sometimes have) flung him on one side with his leg broken, but with his mule unhurt. He was ill enough off even so; for the spot was very lonely, and it was near nightfall. There was frost in the air already, and the temperature would be somewhere about zero before dawn. But by great good luck another traveller passed, and that traveller the victim's own brother. This model of fraternal affection rode off with the mule "lest it should get stolen," and left his brother in the snow till morning! But the latter was little the worse for his experience after all!

This episode was told us, as it happened, on the day after the query why some animals were very hard to kill; when we had explained that roughly, the lower the animal in the scale of creation, the more cutting and hacking he would stand. Hearing of the Kurd's adventures, the Patriarch looked across at us and observed drily, "I always thought that Kurds were precious low animals, Rabbi, and now I know it."

On the same occasion, a visitor detailed his own experience, when he had gone to pay a visit of sympathy to a Kurdish neighbour, who had recently lost some near relative. He entered the house, and found all the family as he had expected, seated wailing round the fireplace, as proper Kurdish custom dictates. They will sit thus, literally in the ashes, for some days; keeping up a low keening continuously, though at times some one of the party, without the least warning, will spring to his feet and shriek. Any visitor who wishes to express sympathy, takes up a

shovelful of ashes from the hearth and pours it on the heads of the whole circle. The Christian, of course, did not neglect this{279} act of courtesy, but performed it liberally. However, quite unintentionally, he took up some live coals in the shovel, and these, by ill-luck, went down the neck of one of the mourners, who at once sprang to his feet with a howl, exclaiming "I burn, I burn," and began tearing his clothes off. This, however, was quite ordinary behaviour, for wailing and rending of garments are habitual on these occasions; so all the family simply sat still and wailed in sympathy. The unlucky lad was really painfully, though not dangerously, burnt before his friends could be brought to understand that his sufferings were physical rather than mental!

As the recognized head of the Christian "*ashirets*" of Tyari and Tkhuma, and as the present holder of what all Mussulmans of the district recognize as a most ancient and venerable throne, Mar Shimun has a high position among the Kurds personally; though that fact does not, of course, keep them from plundering his people. In the past, indeed, it has not always availed to protect the House of the Patriarch itself from outrage; for when Bedr Khan Beg, the formidable Mira of Bohtan, attacked these Christian tribes in 1845—and perpetrated a massacre so appalling that the years are dated from it to this day—a special attempt was made to "extirpate the head of this brood of serpents."

Qudshanis itself was ravaged; the church plundered; and many priceless records utterly destroyed. Even a *firman* said to be signed by the Prophet himself, and specially granting toleration to members of this body, was destroyed; no doubt as a forgery, because it condemned the very thing that its captors were in the act of doing. Whether as a matter of fact the document in question was actually Mohammed's own dictation and sealing, cannot of course be proved now; but tradition has it that he was taught what he knew of Christianity by a monk of this

body, so the story may be true. It is perhaps more probable that the grant in question was made by Omar, who was Khalif at the time that the Mussulmans over-ran Persia; and who is known to have made some such grant of toleration to the Nestorian Patriarch of his day.{280}

However that may be, it is the fact that every Kurd in the district of Hakkiari (a general name for the mountain districts of southern Kurdistan) has some reverence for Mar Shimun, as a sort of titular head of the land, and as a man of as much hereditary sanctity as a Christian can aspire to. Thus, strict Mussulmans will often consider that the flesh of animals killed by Christians is not clean enough for a true believer to eat. Who can tell if it has been properly made *hallal* or no? If, however, the beast has been killed by one of the patriarchal family, the strictest Moslem will not hesitate; particularly if the slaughtering has been done with one particular knife that is one of the heirlooms of the house.

Many other strange survivals of old days remain in this home of ancient semi-royalty and even more ancient patriarchate, but these must suffice. There are few spectacles more romantic and more attractive than that of this young man whom Providence has called to so difficult a position, loyally doing his best, with the help of his devoted sister, to guide and preserve those that are entrusted to him; to save them in the perils that encompass them, and to make them once more worthy inheritors of their own splendid past.

Note. The conclusion of this chapter provides an opportunity for the insertion of a few notes upon the bird and animal life of the mountains of Hakkiari. The subject has some interest of its own; though the fact that every self-respecting man in the country carries a gun prevents the land from ranking as a sportsman's paradise.

Ibex are fairly common in the southern portions of the range, which are also the more rugged; and moufflon are to be obtained upon the lofty downs of the Armenian plateaux—but not in any great numbers. The former carry very fine heads, and we have seen them

with knobs that marked a life of ten or even eleven years, and a measurement, round the curve of the horn, of over four feet.

Bears are common enough to be a nuisance in the spring—when they do much harm to the flocks—and are usually of the ordinary brown type. Sometimes they are of a greyish colour; and the district of Jilu can boast a variety which is described as "white." The only skin of the type that the writer has seen, however, was light sandy in hue, and it is probably no more than a slight local variant in colour.

Generally they are hunted in a strictly utilitarian way; the object being not so much as to provide sport as to get rid of a nuisance. All the men of the village who can raise anything that can be fired without bursting go out *en masse*, and beat the hillside till the quarry is roused. When that happens there is as much firing as at an ordinary tribal{281} skirmish; and by the time the skin is brought in, it sometimes has some resemblance to a fishing-net.

One good man of Qudshanis, however, had a more sporting disposition, and made a practice of hunting the bear in a way that would have delighted the soul of the Emperor Maximilian, with no other weapon than a short stick (some eight inches long, pointed at the ends) and a dagger. His method was to track the bear to his lair, to approach to within arm's length if possible, and then rouse the enemy. It seems that the bear could be trusted to stand at gaze for an instant with open mouth, and the hunter (so said deponent, who was the worthy old steward of the Nestorian Patriarch) then thrust the stick into his mouth, thus propping his jaws apart. The bear was sure to use his paws to get rid of the nuisance, and so laid himself open to just one stab from the dagger. It was certainly a sporting method, and the hunter got many skins and much local *kudos*, the latter being certainly well earned.

However, as often happens, there came a day when something went wrong. Precisely what happened was not known, for the hunter was, as usual, alone—and he never came back to explain how he had failed.

As is the case with many half-wild races, Assyrians regard the bear as half-human, or at all events nearer to man than other beasts; and are convinced, among other things, that he understands human speech. In one instance known to the writer, a girl went down to the fruit-orchards one summer evening with the reprehensible purpose of helping herself from trees that did not belong to her family. As she peered up the tree in the dusk, she saw the soles of a pair of feet above her, and called to the supposed boy to throw her down a share of the fruit. She got no answer, and so went on: "Then I'll go and tell

Abraham that you are stealing his fruit, and he will come out with a gun and a stick." At that word, a half-grown bear dropped out of the tree beside her, and she perceived that the feet had been his, and not those of a boy. (The resemblance between the footprint of a bear and that of a man, in snow, is remarkably close.) It would be hard to say which party was the most scared, for they ran away in opposite directions; but, naturally, nothing would persuade the girl that the bear had not understood her.

Wild boar is fairly common in the lower hills, which are forest-clad; but the sportsman must reconcile himself to shooting them, for orthodox "pig-sticking" is out of the question in that land. Some of the Christian tribes (though they keep no domestic swine) will shoot and eat these beasts; and at times play unkind tricks on their Mussulman neighbours, inviting them to a banquet and putting pig before them. Kurds are not too particular under these circumstances, though they will not eat the meat knowingly. Still, if trapped thus, they salve their consciences with the remark: "The Christian had the sin, and I had the good dinner." It is, however, only men of Tkhuma who act thus. The good folk of Tyari might not be above scoring off the enemy in that or any other way, but they will never themselves eat either pork or hare. They do not realize, however, that the rule is not peculiar to that elect people, their own tribe. A good lady of that valley once expressed to the writer her disgust at hearing that Christians were to be enrolled in the army in future. "How can I endure to have my sons set to eat pigs' flesh among the Mussulmans?" Nothing would persuade her that they were not likely to be exposed to that horror at any rate.

Wolves are numerous, and their packs are at times a positive danger to life, particularly in hard winters. Solitary travellers are known to have been pulled down by them; and the local sheepdog is of necessity a powerful{282} and savage brute, though he has little of the sagacity of a Scotch collie. We have known a case in which a pack of wolves (driven by hunger, of course) actually entered the suburbs of the city of Van, and sent in a crafty old she-wolf as decoy. She brought a pack of rash street-dogs out at her tail, and the ambush was a great and shining success. The wolves got a good meal for once, and the nights in that quarter of the city were more peaceful for some time after. In the same winter (that of 1905-6, which was of exceptional severity) a pack of hunger-driven wolves actually invaded an Armenian village, and remained in possession of it for a matter of an hour. All human beings were driven to take cover in the houses, and every dog in the place was killed, while the middens

were cleaned up as they had not been for many a day. The folds could not be entered, nor could the houses—else a grim tragedy would have been enacted—and, after a while, the enemy withdrew, after a strange temporary reversal of the normal condition of things.

Leopards are still to be found in the mountains, but very rarely. We have, however, seen a cub in captivity, and he was certainly not imported into the land. Lynx and marten are rare now; and the foul-eating "ghoul," which is apparently a type of hyæna, is found on Mosul plain, as mentioned above, in company with the equally disreputable jackal. The lion which, on the evidence of Assyrian sculptures, was once common on the Mesopotamian plain, is extinct now; though old men among the Arabs still look back fondly to the days when a youth was expected to prove his manhood by killing one as a gift to his bride.

If the lion is extinct, however, another great beast that figures with him as royal game for the King of Nineveh would seem to be not quite exterminated yet. This is the aurochs, which appears repeatedly on the carvings in the British Museum.

We have never seen this animal in life, but we once saw the head of something of the *genus bos* on the wall of the house of a Kurdish gentleman of Amadia. Its preservation was deplorable, but it had long fine horns, and its colour had been white originally, as is the case with wild cattle elsewhere, but is very rare with the domestic animal. We observed to our host that his ox had unusually fine horns, but he declared "that is no common ox, *Effendim*; it is one of the wild cattle of the mountains, of which there are very few in these days." We regret to add that seven years later the head had perished altogether, which is a distinct loss; still, there is other evidence that the animal is not entirely extinct as yet.

Birds are not numerous, but what there are are mostly of the decorative order. The great golden eagle is fairly plentiful in the mountains, and the black one is seen at times. Vultures and kites are common enough; and Haji Laqlaq the stork comes in regularly from his pilgrimage to Mecca in the spring. Magpies are plentiful and are seen in flocks of twenty at a time, in numbers that preclude any superstition attaching to them. They are good scavengers; and the parts that appear as black in their English cousins are seen, on examination, to be of a dark metallic blue and green in these specimens, so that the total effect is really brilliant.

The "blue jay" too, is really blue in this land; for he does not confine himself to a few blue feathers in his wings, as with us, but does equal honour to both our universities, by appearing with a

Cambridge blue body and Oxford blue wings, and thus has a magnificent appearance. Even he is outdone by the kingfisher, who is a large specimen of his kind, and clothes himself entirely in deep metallic blue with a marvellous sheen. That at least is the livery of the fisher on the River Zab. Lower down{283} on the Tigris, the blue is light in colour, though equally metallic in tone, and is set off by a pair of bright russet wings.

The hoopoe comes in the summer and is, as ever, an attractive and gay neighbour, with his body of bright chestnut, and wings and crest of barred black and white. Nestorians call him "the bird of Solomon," and tell the familiar legend of his crown; but Armenians account for it in a different way. "Their fathers say" that the hoopoe was once a damsel, very pretty, but also very conceited, who would not veil her face as decency dictates, but kept the covering that should have concealed it cocked up on the top of her head, so that all the young men could see her. So she was turned into a hoopoe, and goes about for ever in the same flirty way as of old, with the veil still on the top of her head in the guise of a crest!

Of all feathered fowl, however, none are more brilliant in colour than the bee-eater and the golden oriol. A gold-coloured body and black wings distinguish the latter; but we have never been able to satisfy ourselves as to how many hues go to the livery of the small and quick-flying bee-eater. Gold, red, green, and blue all form part of it we know; and a flock of them flying in the sun is at least a beautiful sight, though not one that is too welcome to the keeper of hives. If only they would turn their attention to flies of other varieties, one would afford them unstinted praise; as it is, one pardons their iniquities for the sake of their good looks.

Page 275. Note. We add a note to make this matter clearer, for the benefit of liturgiologists. Two sorts of leaven are put into the dough to leaven it, and both are called "melka" (King, cf the Spanish title for the Host "Su Majestad.")

One of these is a portion taken, before consecration, from the loaf prepared for the last celebration, and reserved for this purpose. The other consists of a mere pinch of flour, or of bread reduced once more to the consistency of flour, which is kept in a special vessel in the sanctuary.

The tradition concerning this is as follows. When the Lord distributed the elements at the first Qurbana in the upper room, he gave a double portion of the bread to St. John. The Apostle consumed one part and reserved one, which he moistened with the blood of Christ on Calvary, and divided, after the Ascension, into twelve

portions. One was given to each Apostle when they went forth to preach, that the act of mingling particles of it with the dough to be consecrated at every Eucharist, might connect the bread used on each occasion with that used at the first. This Melka is supplemented as needful, either with pulverised bread from the Qurbana or with fine flour, (our informant was not clear on this point), and is held to contain particles of the original, or at least to have been put into connexion with it.

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CHAPTER XIV

THE GREAT CAÑONS

(THE NESTORIAN "ASHIRETS" OF HAKKIARI)

QUDSHANIS is probably a spot that is unique on the world's surface; but on leaving it for the south, the traveller soon finds himself in a land that is fascinating enough, though plenty of parallels might be found for it, even in the present orderly world, and numbers in the history of every nation in the past. This land is the country of the Nestorian "*ashirets*" of Tyari, Tkhuma, Diz, Baz, and a few other wild mountain cantons; men who live under the peculiar conditions described in an earlier chapter.

It is to be expected that the natural features of a land where so primitive a state of things prevails will be rugged; and those of Hakkiari are wild and strange enough to merit a special description. The mountains are in fact a section of that great Taurus range, which extends in a curve from the shores of the Mediterranean to somewhere south of Baghdad. At this point they are pierced by a large river, the Zab, which rises well to the north of them on the Armenian plateau; and with rare determination bores its way clean through the range, till it emerges on the Mesopotamian level to the south of it, and so falls into the Tigris a little

below Mosul. The cleft that it makes in the mountains is one of the great *cañons* of the world, comparable, in the opinion of those who have seen all, to the gorges of Yosemite and the "great Cañon of Colorado." Midway in its course the peaks of Supa Durig and Koka Bulend, the two kings of that wilderness, stand opposite to one another. Each is nearly fourteen thousand feet in height above the sea; and as a bird flies, their crests{285} are not more than twelve miles apart. But the level of the river Zab that flows between them is only 4000 feet above the sea at that point, so that the net depth of the gorge is over 9000 feet.

We presume that this insistence on the part of the river arises from the fact that the huge wrinkle of the earth's surface which men call the mountains of Taurus is of later date than the elevation of the plateau to the north of it; and that consequently, as the rivers were already flowing to the south, they steadily gouged away the barrier, as it was being slowly heaved up. Or perhaps the Zab may have found some great crevasse in the mountains which gave it the opportunity that it needed. Whatever the process, the result has been a series of most magnificent gorges, with walls falling almost precipitously from the level of eternal snow to that of fig-tree, vine, and olive; and side ravines which are scarcely inferior to the main gorge in grandeur. So narrow is the chasm, and so steep the sides of it, that even at the river level avalanches form a very real danger to spring travel, and must often be crossed by hundreds in a day's march. Such crossing is not too easy; for smooth snow at an angle of 40°, terminated by a drop into a swollen torrent, may be dangerous for any caravan to traverse; and many are the tales told of the escapes or deaths of mountaineers.

One man of our acquaintance was caught by a descending avalanche and swept down the hill by the moving mass. While motion lasted, he was of course fairly safe; but he had the wits to remember that the peril must

come when the foremost part of the great snow-slide was checked on the level, and the hinder part, still advancing, squeezed itself together like a telescoping railway train. By good luck he was upright when motion ceased and he felt the snow consolidating round him. Working his body frantically to and fro, he made as it were a little cell for himself, so that he remained uncrushed; but he was buried and held a prisoner, for his legs and feet were fast. There he remained for three days, for a man can breathe through a considerable thickness of even compressed snow; and there{286} he was when his friends came out to search for his dead body. They probed the snow with stick; and, as it happened, poked one down actually into his chamber, so that he was able to catch the end of it and hold on. He was extricated but little the worse.

An American missionary in the land had a similar experience in one of the side valleys. He and his party made a rash attempt to cross a slope of new snow, lying to the depth of perhaps six inches on the smooth surface of old hard stuff; and naturally they started an avalanche. The whole party of eleven men were borne down a matter of 2000 feet; and the marvel was that only one of them perished.

At one particular place an enormous avalanche is an annual event, owing to the peculiar configuration of the gorges. The winter fall on a whole mountain side is artfully concentrated into one funnel-shaped valley, which discharges into the Zab itself; and the snow-slide frequently dams the stream for some hours. There is a profitable harvest of great fish to be gathered in the dry bed below the dam at that time; though such gleaning is of an unusually exciting character. For naturally when the dam does go, it goes with a rush; and the point of safety is a good distance above the normal level of the current!

The average width of the river in the mountains is perhaps fifty yards, and its pace is very great; yet such

temporary bridgings are not uncommon. The writer has seen a case where an avalanche had not only crossed the river, but had then been swirled round by the configuration of the rocky slope on the other side, so that it overwhelmed a house that had been built in what appeared to be an absolutely safe recess. Seven lives were lost on that occasion, though one old man was found living after six days burial under the snow, the roof-beams having so fallen as to make a protection for his head.

In such a land as this, life is a hard matter; all cultivation is on terraces, built as described above, and subject to the constant danger of destruction by flood or avalanche.{287}

Barring such accidents the terrace fields are fertile enough, if they have a sufficiency of water; but this again has to be supplied them artificially by leading the irrigation channels from the main stream (often along precipitous faces of rock) and maintaining them carefully when built. Millet and rice are the staple crops; the former furnishing food both for man and beast, for its long stalks are excellent fodder. Its grain is very sustaining as food, as we know from experience, but it is not attractive. In fact bread made from it rather suggests that your host has run short of flour, and has eked matters out with an equivalent weight of sawdust! Even so, however, "it is better to eat millet bread and carry a gun, than to be an unarmed *rayat* under the Ottoman" under present conditions.

Roads are of course unknown in the land, and there is no such thing as a wheeled vehicle from one end of Hakkiari to the other. Tracks scramble up the gorges along the slopes of shale, and climb by what are known as *stangi* over and round projecting noses of precipice. A *stanga* is a built up track; the stones being often held in place, by their own weight only, on branches of trees stuck in crevices of the rock, and projecting out over the torrent.

Mules can get along these roads fairly well, being to the manner born; and sheep and goats do well enough also.

But certain villages have a happy immunity from the attentions of the raider, owing to the fact that no quadruped can be driven along the tracks that lead from them. Such cattle as they possess were either born on the land, or were carried up in the days of their calfhood on men's backs. As for horses, it is a tradition that they cannot be got through the gorges at all, and nobody but a mad Englishman ever thinks of attempting such a thing. It has been done twice, however; once by the writer, and once by a military Consul from Van. Of course the horses were not ridden; and in fact had each of them two men to look after their needs, one at the head to lead them, and the other at the tail to hold them on to the track when it went round sharp corners at a steep angle. This secured that when the poor beast slipped at such a place, he did not fall into the{288} river, but onto the track; after which a man held his head down to prevent his struggling to rise (which would have meant disaster), till all the men who could get a hold of him were gathered round. Then came the signal, "Are you ready—lift!" and the astonished horse found himself raised with a straight hoist upwards, like a baby, and so set on his feet once more. Thus they were got through; but they all left their shoes behind!

The bridges which cross the river form quite a feature of the land, and show considerable engineering skill; though the crossing of them needs a steady head as they are constructed at present. In principle, they are true cantilevers. Piers are built at some convenient place, and a long "bracket" of poplar trees is built out over the stream from each shoreward side. The butts are weighted down with stones, and the projecting ends are perhaps forty feet apart. Two long poplars are then slung side by side between the ends of the converging brackets, and a floor of withy hurdles makes the bridge complete.

As the trunks are very elastic, the whole structure swings considerably even if it does remain horizontal. Often,

however, it acquires a pronounced tilt to one side or the other; and in any case a three-foot track without any sort of parapet is narrow for a bridge. By old rule, you ought not to look down in crossing such a place, lest the sight of the torrent whirling below should unnerve you. In this case, however, look down you must, and make the best of the vision of the torrent as seen through the withy hurdle floor; for that floor is full of holes and other traps and stumbling blocks, and if you trip, disaster follows! Even natives sometimes condescend to be led across these places, or even to crawl; but animals vary as much as menfolk in their behaviour on such occasions. The writer has known a plains-bred horse walk over one of these bridges as if to the manner born, without even a man to his tail; and has seen a mountain-bred mule jib till he had to be ignominiously towed through the river by a combination of tethering and baggage ropes!

One would expect that the useful donkey would be the{289} very best of all possible animals for use in this land; but the Assyrians of Tyari have a prejudice against him. "He that is Lord of Ears"—his name is quite unmentionable,—is *iyba* for the *ashirets*. *Iyba* is an institution that needs some explaining. The word means "shame;" but the European presently gets the impression that it can be extended to cover any mortal thing which he orders, and which for any reason the native does not want to do. Anyway, the poor donkey is *iyba*, and no mountaineer will own one. A legendary man of Tyari dared to do so once; but life was made such a burden to him by the jeers of all his kin, that at last he hove the unfortunate jackass into the Zab from one of the bridges we have been describing, and was free of further reproach. A mule is honourable enough, if you are so fortunate as to own one; but it is etiquette to address a hybrid beast like that in Kurdish (which is a second tongue to all mountaineers); whereas your ox, being a proper and

biblical sort of animal, is addressed in Syriac, which is a good Christian tongue.

So far does prejudice against the ass go, that when the Gospel for Palm Sunday has to be read, the priest (who usually translates the text as he reads from the "Old Syriac" of the Pshitta into the Vernacular) substitutes a word that means "colt" for "ass." One poor rector, who determined to be faithful to the text, found that sundry "aggrieved parishioners" were complaining of him to the Patriarch for a shameless falsification of the sacred Scriptures.

Nor is there a prejudice only against the ass. Few mountaineers will eat the hare, or the pig, in that these come under Levitical prohibition. And as regards the eating of other animals, we remember this conversation with a certain trusted servant and steward, which speaks for itself. "Tell me O Rabbi; is the thing really true which they say, that the French do eat frogs?"

"It is true, O deacon; and they say that they are good."

"Rabbi; if we had a man who did that in Tkhuma, we should kill him."

Hitherto, there has been no law in the land (as may {290} perhaps be inferred from the foregoing paragraph), but tribal custom has ruled; and in consequence Hakkiari has been the home of good manners, and of that self-respect which comes from a sense of natural superiority to the plainsman! This last is strongly developed among them; "The greatest nation in all the world," said an *ashiret* Christian one day, "is the English. Next to that comes the Tyari." (One may readily guess that this was the speaker's own tribe.) "Third, but a long way behind these, is the Russian. There are no other nations."

This sense of congenital superiority brought the writer into rather hot water, when in the year 1904 he brought a select party of these wild Highlanders down to the city of

Van, there to receive at his hand instruction that (it was hoped) would "soften their morals and not allow them to be ferocious."

They came, they deposited their goods; they ate a meal. And forthwith went out into the street and began to thrash all the Armenians they could find! There was some sort of excuse urged, "The dogs dared to laugh at our long hair, Rabbi." But the real reason, as subsequently explained, was the general feeling that the sooner these inferior beings learnt to know their place, the better it would be for the comfort of everybody!

Next day a complaint came in from an American mission, also established in the town. These *ashirets* had caught the Armenian headmaster of their school, and were playing leap-frog over him in the street, greatly to the scandal of his pupils, who were, however, all too scared (or possibly too appreciative) to attempt a rescue!

Stealing, properly so called, is almost unknown in the mountains. There are of course a good many things that are practically held in common, and which you take when you need, such as pasturage for instance; but theft is very rare and punished with exemplary severity. A father of unusually Roman disposition has actually been known to assent to the death sentence passed on his son when that young man had so far disgraced himself as to steal. It must be owned, however, that death was only adjudged{291} in this case because nobody could think of any alternative. No prison was available; and yet something must be done under the circumstances; so what was there for it but to shoot the man? The Patriarch forbade that penalty, and the unworthy mountaineer was only banished from his valley.

It is of course clearly understood in Hakkiari—and one hopes that the English reader understands it also—that robbery and theft are not at all the same thing. Any gentleman may go on the raid. His plunder is his lawful property, and his exploit a source of legitimate pride. In

fact, their code is exactly similar to that of another thorough gentleman, Evan Dhu Maccombich; "He that steals a cow from a poor widow is a thief, but he that lifts a herd of cattle from the Sassenach is a gentleman drover." The good folk of Tyari have been in the habit for generations of imitating the heroes of another of Scott's novels in these matters; for a tithe of all the plunder got in raids went always to the Church of Mart Miriam (Lady Mary, *i.e.* the Blessed Virgin), in the valley of Walto. "They paid tithe on every drove they took from the south; and if they were something lightly come by, and their confessor knew his business, I have known them make the tithe a seventh." Alas, however, those days are passing; and though the devotion of the men of Tyari is as good as ever, the profits of raids are not what they were.

One case, indeed, is recorded (his Holiness the Patriarch is our authority for the tale) when the raiders had some scruples about disposing of their spoil. The heroes of the incident were the men of Diz valley, who had successfully lifted a cow from some Kurdish neighbours, and were proposing that she should furnish a sumptuous Christmas banquet. Some scrupulous soul, however, had grave doubts whether the beast, having been Mussulman property so lately, was clean enough for a religious purpose of that kind.[135]

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The worthy rector of Diz rose to the occasion when this religious difficulty was put before him. *Rabbi qasha* exorcised the cow; and so was honoured with an invitation to the banquet at which she subsequently figured as the *pièce de resistance*!

We have given in a previous chapter the "rules to govern the conduct of a gentleman in case of feud;" and the only occasion when these do not hold, is when a *Jehad* is proclaimed by Moslems. When you go to war in the name of Allah and religion, you are naturally entitled to commit

any atrocity you like, and usually do so. The old courtesies, too, were further abrogated as the result of the Armenian massacres of 1895. The systematic outraging of the women then was part of the Turkish plan, and seems to have been the deliberate order of Abdul Hamid. When such acts had been once authorized by the Khalif, it was natural that the lower type of Kurd should not readily return to the better ways of his fathers in more ordinary raids.

Speaking generally, however, feuds are carried on with great lightness of heart, much gaiety, and very little malice. The writer has known men who were at open feud with one another meet in the household of the English Mission (where of course, truce was observed), and chaff one another in most friendly wise as they shared tea with the English "apostles." In war time even "booby traps" (or something like them) were not unknown; and once the men of Tyari rejoiced in a score gained over an opponent, who feared to make any attack upon a position held in truth by a dozen men and boys, because they suddenly found themselves confronted with a formidable battery of artillery which they had not credited the Tyari men with possessing at all.

As a matter of fact, the cannon were mere dummies; and were neither more nor less than beehives (the local beehive is a long narrow thing, in shape much resembling an old-fashioned eel-trap), which had been artfully faked for the occasion and plastered all over with black mud!

The heroes of this exploit were so delighted with their score, that they set to work to make a cannon of their{293} very own. A hollow poplar trunk formed the barrel this time, and it was wrapped round with bands of iron on a system not unlike that on which a modern "wire-wound" gun is made at Elswick, though the materials were hardly such as Messrs. Armstrong's inspector would have approved.

The engine was only meant to bluff their enemies, and did that well on at least one occasion; but the temptation to see what it could do got too much for its possessors, and they (with the wonderful courage of ignorance) charged the thing and fired it! Of course, it burst; but the providence that guards schoolboys guarded these boys too, and nobody was hurt.

Some years ago, the chances in these feuds and battles were about even; and had they continued so the writer could not have found it in his heart to advocate the abolition of so ancient and interesting a form of sport, nor would any of the combatants have wished it. It is true that the Christians had usually to face odds in numbers; but they had strong positions to defend, and such a reputation as fighting men, that the Kurds themselves admitted that when you went against the men of Tyari and Tkhuma, it was well to have odds of five to one in numbers on your side. Then, however, each side used old guns of much the same character; flint-locks to wit, with home-made powder and bullets. This, as noted elsewhere, is not the case now; for the Kurds have been equipped with more modern arms. The powder the folk of the mountains manufactured for themselves, being able to get sulphur in plenty in their hills, and burning their own charcoal. Nitre could always be gathered in some caverns where the sheep were folded, but our knowledge of chemistry does not enable us to say exactly how. Bullets were easy to come by, for lead crops out in thick veins in certain gorges, and can be absolutely cut out of the rock in chunks for the purpose. As for the casting, it is wonderful what unsuspected uses there are for a thimble! Nobody dreams of using it hereabouts as an assistance to sewing; but when set in a lump of clay, it makes a very tolerable bullet-mould!

One skilful old priest of our acquaintance earned quite a{294} good income by converting muzzle-loaders into "Martinis," which is the general term for any sort of

breech-loader. He was a very fair smith, and though his copies of the Martini lock and breech mechanism might not have passed the War Office standard, they were very satisfactory for their owners.

Some artists hope to improve the local brand of gunpowder. One of the first questions put to us during our wanderings in the mountain glens was, "Rabbi, is it oak charcoal or walnut that you English use for the making of your gun-medicine?" "Neither, but willow," said we, that piece of unclerical information having somehow stuck in our mind from some old "book of useful knowledge." Hence it would appear that the most unlikely things come in useful at times, for the answer materially increased our prestige.

Many a primitive practice and habit goes on in these mountains, but perhaps the most startling to a stranger is the taking of the bath *coram publico*; a custom which is common to both Christians and Kurds. The *rationale* of the habit is sound enough. Mud floors get damp and unhealthy with the weekly wash, and the much splashing of water that it entails; let it then be done in the open, by the spring or river, where a fire can be lit to heat the water and for the comfort of the bather.

It is a little disconcerting for the European at first, and seems a startling drop back through a good many centuries, when you turn a corner in the road suddenly, and find yourself confronted by a group of maidens, who have put all their clothes in the big copper to wash, and are engaged in performing that office for one another. However, if the stranger is embarrassed, they are not. It is not manners to stare of course; and they sit still undisturbed till the man has passed, without even interrupting their conversation. Good narrow-minded folk at home say that they have no sense of decency. That, however, is an absolute libel; and it is far more near to the truth to say that it is the sense of indecency that is absent, as it was in the Garden of Eden.

Layard had experience of this custom{295} when he brought men of these tribes down to Mosul to work at his excavations. This he did for convenience' sake, in that they, having only a mountaineer's superstitions, were immune to those of the plain; and did not raise the same difficulties about digging in the mounds that the Arabs did. Naturally, his excavators brought their wives and daughters to cook for them; and naturally, those ladies brought their habits, and took their tubs as they had always done at home. When it was represented to them by their employer that they had scandalized the decent and respectable city of Mosul by so doing, they replied innocently, "But, sahib, if the Mussulmans object, they need not look." A Saturday tub in Tyari is a solemn and proper ceremonial. All the family go down together, and the washing is carried out, in true Homeric style, by the ladies personally. The old women scrub the old men, and the damsels the youths. When the men have finished the girls take their tubs.

Certainly one poor Englishman had a painful experience, when he, a newcomer to the country, took a walk down the valley of Tyari on a Saturday afternoon. Turning a corner abruptly, he found a fair maiden sitting in all innocence in her bath. The Englishman had been properly brought up, so he averted his gaze, and passed by, as far away as the narrow limits of the path allowed. However, the damsel had been properly brought up too, but in a rather different school; and seeing that it was a *qasha* (Priest), who was passing, she sprang out of her bath and came to kiss his hand as politeness dictates. Saint Anthony fled, totally misunderstanding her purpose; and the damsel followed after, ejaculating plaintively "Rabbi, Rabbi, what have I done that you will not allow me to kiss your hand?" It is said that he ultimately covered his eyes with his left hand, and extended his right at arm's length for the salute. However, a very few weeks' experience gave him perfect

indifference to the spectacle.

Old chivalrous rules of the obligation of hospitality still hold in the mountains; and a conspicuous instance of this was given by one of the Nestorian *maliks* in the January{296} of 1907. As a general rule, no effort is made to march troops through these hills, for it is at once toilsome, useless and dangerous. In that month, however, a company of infantry were sent through the gorge of the Zab, with orders to report at Julamerk, a seat of government to the north of it; the object probably being to show that the thing could be done.

Being at best but half-trained men of Kurdish blood, and knowing that they had been sent where no troops had gone before, they naturally got more and more "jumpy" as they penetrated the gorge, and began to see an ambush behind every rock. Thus when they met a party of four Tyari men descending the road, they opened fire on them and shot down the lot!

This was not, we believe, the cold-blooded murder that it seemed, but a pure fit of nerves on the part of undisciplined men. However, having done it, they were naturally more frightened than ever at what they had done; and fairly ran for it (so far as anyone can run on those roads, which is not very fast), to the house of a prominent Christian *malik* of Tyari, Ismail of Chumba. They crossed the bridge to his house; and so demoralized were they that they did not even secure safety by breaking it down behind them, a result that could have been secured by ten minutes' work with a pocket-knife. They told the chief that they had killed his own clansmen without provocation, and asked him to protect them! It says much for mountain chivalry that he recognized the claim of the suppliant without hesitation, and promised to do his best, *if* it was in his power to control his own tribesmen under the circumstances.

Those tribesmen gathered very soon for their revenge,

and came up the valley towards Chumba in force; and then the *malik* went out and met them at the bridge, to urge that the thing had been after all an accident, so to speak, and not a butchery, and that it must be judged as such. A long and hot discussion followed; the tribesmen saying, with some force, that they did not care whether the thing was an accident or not; their men were dead, and they would have blood for blood. All arguments were tried{297} in vain, till at last the mountaineers summed up, "It is no good, *malik*; you have done your best, but we must have our revenge, and that is our last word. Stand out of the way."

At that Ismail took his stand on the bridge and used his final argument. "If that is your last word, now hear mine. These men are my guests now, and have eaten my bread and are in my house. What they did before is nothing to me; and if it were my own brother they had killed I would guard them now. If you dare to attack, I and mine will defend them; and you will have to kill your own chief before you lay hand on any one of his guests." At that the avengers held back and hesitated till night fell; and under that cover, Malik Ismail and his son Shlimun escorted their guests into safety by the tracks over the hills, and led them unharmed to Julamerk. The whole was as fine an act of chivalry as these days can show.

With their chivalry goes as is often the case with mountaineers, a vein of what we can call nothing but school-boyishness. The pure lark of a fight appeals to them irresistibly. In the spring of 1912, the men of one particular Christian district known as Salabekan contrived to carry out a most successful raid against their neighbours over the hill, the Kurds of Châl. It was only an episode in a feud that had dragged on for many years, but was executed with some skill; the raiders securing 500 sheep without even waking their late owners! When they were well on their way home, however, it occurred to some young hotheads that there is really no satisfaction in lifting your enemy's

sheep, unless you know that he knows who has scored off him!

Now Simmy, Simmy of the side,
Come out and see a Johnstone ride!

sang the old moss-trooper who had looted Crichton's stable; so, agreeably to "the Galliard's" principles, they went back again to the village, there to fire shots and shout contumely till the Kurds were awakened and came out. Then of course a fight resulted, in which three or four men{298} were killed. This excited our wrath; not because we grudged them a Kurd or so; still less the sheep that they had fairly earned, and which were very likely theirs originally anyhow; but because among the Kurdish dead was a policeman (the Agha of Châl being a Government *mudir* among other things), and we feared that a dead policeman would take a great deal of explaining! However, it all ended happily, the officer not being missed! Still, we thought it only our duty to urge the desirability of making up the feud upon Mar Shimun; and asked him if he could not use his patriarchal influence in that direction. His Holiness quite agreed with us that it was most desirable. "Really, the Christians ought to make peace now. They are three corpses and four guns to the good!"

With their "larkishness" goes also a boy's touchiness and sensitiveness to a slight. The writer once went down through the district of Tkhuma, having as companion one of the chiefs of the canton, whose guest he naturally was when passing the man's village. A few weeks later he returned; to be met at the border of the district by another chief, one Yalda, of almost equal influence with his previous host.

"It is my hope that you are going to stay with me this time Rabbi."

As the answer was not given immediately, the

gentleman proceeded to explain the necessity of the case.

"You see, you stayed with Giwergis when you were here before; and that was all right, as you came down with him. This time though, you ought to come to me. If you do I shall be very glad to see you; but if you don't—well I fear that the only thing for me is to shoot you!"

The invitation was accepted, and no more pleasant host could any man have had.

A sad scandal is related of a certain apostle of teetotalism who found himself in a mountain village on the day of a wedding feast. He was cordially invited to stop and share in the feasting and dancing; and did so—to reprove excesses and see that decorum was preserved. In due course the governor of the feast invited him to take wine with{299} him, and this the total abstainer a little too curtly declined. The mountaineer bristled up immediately. Such a refusal was a downright insult. And literally at the pistol's mouth the poor guest had to gulp the draught down. Nor was that the end of his woes. The other guests were all ripe for frolic; and all that afternoon the unhappy man was haunted by a procession of rollicking caterans, each equipped with a practicable rifle and a large goblet of wine. Of course there was no refusing such very insistent hospitality; and over the inevitable *dénouement* we feel ourselves constrained to draw a veil.

The fact is though, that boys with guns in their hands can be dangerous, when their feelings are hurt, or when for any reason they are frightened; and then they may turn against their best friends. Only once in his twenty-five years of residence did Dr. Browne find these mountaineers turn really nasty with him, and on that occasion, the men concerned were our good friends of Tkhuma; though the blame did not really rest on them.

A certain Roman Catholic intriguer in the nation desired to dispose of Dr. Browne's influence, and was not

particular either as to the methods he employed or as to the result of them, whether for the foreigner or for his own people. Having ascertained that Dr. Browne was proposing a journey into Tkhuma, and having discovered some details of his plans, he sent a message down into the district. “See here, that Englishman is coming down your way with a companion; and his real intent is to destroy your religion. You will see that when he comes he will do this and that—things that look quite innocent, but which will be a sign to you that I speak truth. Then do you deal with him according to your zeal.”

Down came the Englishman with his companion, and did the acts named, to find that he had roused a storm. For some days both were kept as prisoners in the house of one of the village chiefs; and matters got so far that the leading men were actually debating, in the presence of their captives, whether they should kill them or not. This question occasioned a quarrel, and knives were drawn in{300} the dispute. Then Dr. Browne stepped forward, knowing of course what the trouble was about (for he spoke the Syriac tongue like a native), but (we are convinced) only stirred by the scandal of Christians quarrelling and fighting with one another. He, the prisoner in their hands, rebuked them paternally for that sin; talked to them generally for their good; and finally issued his orders that before proceeding with the discussion the two that had drawn knives on one another should exchange the kiss of peace! Well, they did. Being slightly ashamed of themselves, they kissed and made friends like the children that they are. But after they had done that, at the order of the Englishman, it was really impossible to go on discussing whether they should kill him; and so the whole incident closed!

Courage, coolness and humour are a necessity for the European who would wander here; but with them he is practically as safe as in London. Men deficient in those

qualities may at any time find themselves in an awkward position; as befell a certain unfortunate "Frank" who came into the land to study Kurdish folk-lore, "without a pass from Roderick Dhu." He had disregarded the advice given him, to take some "Nestorian" from the house of the Patriarch, who could guarantee his character and explain his naturally puzzling proceedings to both Kurd and Christian; and took instead an Armenian who knew nothing of the land.

Accompanied by this man, he went down into the land of Tkhuma, which is as wild a district of Christian *ashirets* as any in Hakkiari. It was just after harvest, and folk had nothing to do; so a little friendly fight was in progress between two Christian villages. Of course the foreign traveller was stopped and questioned by armed men, who demanded who he was and what he had come for. Had he told the truth, and said that he was neutral in the dispute, he might have been as safe as the Kenites were, when Sisera was fighting out his quarrel with certain Israelitish *ashirets*: but his wretched Armenian was panic-struck, and was at some pains to explain that his master had come down in the interests of one particular faction, and was the{301} intimate friend of its leader. As a matter of fact (though he did not realize it till too late), the gentlemen who had stopped him were prominent leaders on the other side. Hence, taking the man's own account of himself as true, they were much disposed to deal with him as an enemy and a spy.

Fortunately they postponed sentence till they had reported the case to Mar Shimun; and the Patriarch ordered that he should be released, that his property (which had naturally been confiscated) should be returned to him, and that he should be conducted out of the district. They obeyed, only retaining one "kodak" as a trophy, and led him to their frontier. Still, it was not in human nature to refrain from representing that the journey was very

dangerous; and that they could not dream of letting so honoured a man go without a large escort—and a large fee for each member of it, payable in advance.

Thus escorted, the traveller was taken to the border of the Christian territory, where as luck would have it, they encountered a party of Châl Kurds.

"What have you there?" said the Châl men.

"A Frank of sorts, who says he wants to study your manners and customs," said the Tkhumans.

"Hand him over to us, and he shall have ample opportunity," said the Kurds.

So he had; for having been once robbed by the Christians, he was now robbed over again by the Kurds, and this time there was no Patriarch to appeal to. Thus it was a very tattered and woe-begone traveller who was at last delivered at Amadia. He was certainly uninjured personally, save in self-esteem; but otherwise nothing was left him but the clothes he stood up in, which were not many; and perhaps he was fortunate in retaining as much as that!

Amadia is the nearest Government centre to the Tyari and Tkhuma districts; and in connexion with it we may here recount an adventure of that worthy old *qasha* Tuma mentioned in the last chapter. His reverence had come down to the place, accompanied by a deacon, on some business of his own; and both had been promptly arrested. {302} It was not for any particular crime, but perhaps in the expectation that some reason would turn up if they were kept long enough; perhaps on the principle of tribal responsibility for the acts of any individual, for the men of Tyari had been doing some raiding about that time!

Government having some experience of the fact that Tyari men are hard to catch and harder to hold, a sentry was kept permanently in the cell with the pair, and another posted outside it. Still, the *qasha's* pocket-knife was not

taken from him, but left him for his meals. Of course, the cell door had to be opened at times; and on one of these occasions the key (which according to local custom was not of metal, but a notched slip of wood) was given to the *qasha* to hold for a moment. Instantly he "spaced" the notches with his thumb, which is the usual way of measuring anything in this country, and noted the shape of the key. Before very long, the sentry contracted the habit of going to sleep in the cell; and in those intervals, priest and deacon contrived to get a slat of wood out of the roof, and set to work with no other guide than the memory of the measure taken, to make a duplicate key. It was soon finished; and one morning the sentry's slumber was rudely interrupted, by finding both his prisoners at his throat. He was tied up and gagged quietly; and then came the exciting moment, when the key was first tried in the door. Greatly to the credit of the locksmiths, it fitted; and soon the sentry outside the door, who was not more watchful than his fellow, was safely locked up beside him in the cell and left to await discovery. The priest and deacon were off, on the road to their own mountains; with two good Martini rifles, late Government property, as compensation for their stay at the Government house!

Wild tribesmen on the one side with a tribesman's virtues and vices, attractive mischief-loving boys on another, are all these mountaineers; but there are other aspects of their character that show them as capable of acting like devoted men. This comes out most markedly in their attachment to their own historic Church and their readiness to work on its behalf. One good case of this came to the writer{303}'s knowledge in the village of Rabat, in Tal. Here the brother of the headman of the village was murdered by some Kurds; and the crime must have been one of peculiar atrocity, for even the leathery Kurdish conscience was so severely shocked that the local Aghas decreed that a blood-fine must be paid; and a sum of £60

was actually handed over in cash at their order. The headman accepted the money, as a sign that the feud was finally closed, but declared that he would take no compensation for his brother's death. He handed over the whole sum (a far larger amount than he had ever seen before or was likely to see again) for the repair of the village church, which stood in great need of it. Spurred by this example the whole village turned to, and the edifice was pulled down and rebuilt; every man, woman and child in the place helping to drag the stones from the mountain, tending the kilns where the lime was burnt, or assisting in some other way. The land being almost treeless, the fuel for the kilns was provided by the sacrifice of many of the walnut trees that grew round the village; and be it noted that these were not only valuable property in themselves, but also the source of the one luxury allowed to these people during their long and rigid Lent. The gift meant that the donors would most of them live on millet bread and water, and nothing else, for several Lents to come; so it may be understood that those who gave a walnut tree gave what cost more than the signing of a cheque. No man took a penny for his labour, save a party of artisans from another district, under whose directions the whole was carried out;[136] and as these guilds of builders have that secret of proportion that a modern architect often strives for in vain, the result has been a singularly impressive building, vaulted, and proof against everything save wanton destruction; a monument for some centuries to come of the devotion of the villagers to their church.

True it is that this devotion may take bizarre shapes at times. One district was annoyed by the proselytising efforts of some Romish teachers, who were seeking (of{304} course quite rightly on their principles) to draw away the Nestorians to another obedience, and had succeeded with a certain number of them. A zealous deacon of the old church, much annoyed at this declension from the ways

and faith of the fathers, disclosed to the writer a notable scheme for soaking the walls of the little Roman chapel with paraffin, and setting light to it during service, so as to dispose of chapel and worshippers at once.

In some natural horror, his Rabbi rebuked him, making him recite the Sixth Commandment and other appropriate passages of scripture. He certainly promised to respect Western prejudices in the matter, and kept his word loyally; but incidentally showed that quotation is a game at which two can play. "What you say is true no doubt Rabbi. But yet you know that these Papists are after all little better than idolaters; and it is written that the good King Josiah did bid his people burn the idolaters' bones!"

A case that is perhaps even stranger was the sad lot of a Jewish village, which was situate, for its sins, in the land of Berwar, just within comfortable raiding distance of Tyari territory. Jewish villages are rare in the land, but there are a few; mostly claiming descent from the "ten tribes" which were settled here by Sargon.

If the descent so claimed be correct, the lot of these poor Hebrews was doubly hard; for they were raided on three successive Good Fridays by the Tyari men, not because of any feud, but purely out of respect for the day! Something had to be done, in the raiders' opinion, to show their abhorrence of an act about which they had much the same feelings as King Clovis; and much the same uncertainty as to dates.

The episode was mediæval, but the people are mediæval; and even more civilized people sometimes use the Jews equally ill. The Tyari men must have sung with right good will in those years, the anthem of their Easter vigil service: "Woe to the people of the Jews!"

That strange observances, beliefs, and superstitions should linger in this corner of Asia, even to a greater extent than in other parts, is natural enough. Second sight,{305}

however (to take one widespread phenomenon), does not seem to be so common a faculty here as is the case in Scotland; or it may be simply that the Oriental is more chary of speaking of such a matter to a foreigner. Still, we have heard of cases; notably that of a Seer whom his fellow tribesmen consulted on all matters of importance, and who foretold at the last the disaster that would befall them in one special raid. “If you go out to battle now;” he said, “you will flee seven ways before the Mussulmans; and though you yourself, chief, will be saved by a willow tree, death will be my portion.” The prophecy was literally fulfilled; the Christians being routed in the skirmish, and scattered. The Seer himself (whom the Kurds had intended to spare) was killed by a random shot; and the chief took to flight, and being pursued, had to save himself by swimming the Zab. He was, however, swept away by the current and only escaped by clinging to a projecting branch of willow.



THE GORGE OF THE ZAB
One of the reaches near Tal

No. 13

One case of this second-sight, or vision, concerned the writer himself when making a late autumn visit to Qudshanis from Van in 1907, in company with the late Bishop Collins of Gibraltar. We were expected at the

place; but terribly bad weather made them not only give up hope of our arrival, but even hold special services of prayer for our safe return to Van. Under these circumstances, a certain deacon of Tkhuma, Nwiya[137] by name, who was servant to the Rev. W. H. Browne, came rushing in to his master early one morning in great excitement. "They are coming, Rabbi; they are coming after all. I saw them in a vision by night, and they will be here this day. But I saw them coming up the valley, not down it as Mr. Wigram said he would come. The bishop was wearing a black hat, and Mr. Wigram a white one." Three hours later, the *avant-courier* we had sent before us actually arrived; and in the course of the day the party reached Qudshanis by the route named by the deacon (which had been adopted when the more direct route proved impassable), the bishop wearing an astrakhan fur cap, and the writer a sun-helmet. Any suspicion of confederacy may be ruled out of the question{306} without hesitation, for it was a physical impossibility; and clairvoyance, or some form of thought transference, seems to be the most natural explanation of so strange a coincidence of foreword and fact.

Every nation has, of course, its own superstitions about the mystery of birth, as exemplified in the case of our own ancestors by the belief in "the changeling." In the case of these Nestorians, the danger that menaces the new-born is a sort of fearful night-hag, called the *khwarha*, that carries off and destroys the child. To guard against her visits, the child must be watched day and night for the first days of its life (baptism is usually administered on the eighth day), while an onion and a wool-comb must be kept in the same room. The smell of the former makes the spirit sneeze and deprives her of power; while the latter (which is of iron and so exercises a protective influence of itself) entangles her long locks, so that she flees in terror.[138] An old man in the household of the Patriarch tells how he was once set

to take his turn at watching a certain important infant, and was so far negligent that he went out of the room to smoke a cigarette. As he did so, he saw the terrible *khwarha* approach, change herself into the form of an ibex with very long horns (deponent sayeth not what was her appearance previously, which is a pity), and dash into the room. Of course the conscience-stricken watcher dashed in after her; but to his huge relief found his charge sleeping quietly (a happy effect due no doubt to the protective influence of the comb and the onion), so all ended well. Still that moment is a remembrance of horror to that old man to this day.

Here, as in other districts that we have referred to, the power of faith-healing is a very real thing. Recourse is had to any church that chances to be "Lord of Name" for that purpose, and the result is quite often successful. Certain ordeals have to be gone through at times, success in them being an omen of success in the prayer. Thus the church of Mar Abd-Ishu, in Tal (once the hermitage{307} of an ascetic of great local fame, and situated in a cave high up on an almost inaccessible precipice), is a great place of resort for childless couples who desire offspring. After prayer, it is the proper thing to pass through "Mar Abd-Ishu's passage," which is a natural cleft in the rock, somewhat analogous to St. Wilfrid's needle at Ripon.

An easy passage is a sign of the granting of the prayer; but failure does not imply (as in the English parallel) a bad private character. It only means that the saint expects his fee; and this must be promised him before he will grant what is required. As a matter of fact, a slim person can usually get through the hole easily, but an adult can only do so at one particular angle; and if he is not fortunate enough to hit on this, he may have difficulty; for no assistance may be given by the unauthorized spectator. A Kurdish chief attempted it once to the writer's knowledge, seeing that he desired a son; but he stuck firmly in the crevice and could neither get back nor forward! Scared

almost out of his wits, he jumped at the idea that a gift to the saint might let him through; and when small gifts were not accepted, he raised his terms till he was offering all his sheep and half his rifles, and still the saint held on! He was then told, however, that big bribes were no good; but that he must promise exactly what the saint happened to want, and that his Holiness was sometimes very capricious. The Kurd had to go through a good deal of exercise in guessing what it was that a saint in paradise, who had been an ascetic on earth, would be most likely to covet; but at last he hit on the right thing (or got into precisely the right position), and was released on promising some forty-five piastres, or eight shillings. It is pleasing to add that he paid up faithfully, and that he subsequently got the son that he desired; so that his respect for Christian institutions has much increased.

This shrine, indeed, has a high reputation among all faiths. It has only been robbed once, by Kurds; and on that occasion the robbers were promptly put to death by their own fellow tribesmen, and the spoil returned.{308}

Lunacy meets with a peculiar treatment among the men of Tyari (their neighbours declare that all the tribe are mad together, and support that statement by various tales at their expense, which it is well not to repeat in their vicinity[139]). When all visits to a church of Name fail, the patient is absolutely buried alive. He is prepared for burial exactly as if he were a corpse, borne to the graveyard on a bier, and interred with the full church service. A small opening is left for him to breathe through; and at the end of twenty-four hours, he is carefully resurrected. The nervous shock has often beneficial results; but naturally not always.

It must be owned, too, that the last case in which this treatment was tried to the knowledge of the writer produced a good deal of ill-feeling, because it was so doubtful whether the man was cured or not. He was buried quite properly; and his friends came at the right time to

disinter him. But as soon as the stones were removed, he sprang up, exclaiming, "I am risen! I am risen! it is the Last Day!" Then, looking round disgustedly on the men who had come to assist him: "Whoever would have expected to see *you* at the Resurrection of the Just?"

Query: is that man still mad? His friends would like to think so. But they have an uneasy feeling that he "knows a hawk from a hernshaw when the wind is southerly."

If the Tyari men are thus buried prematurely at times, there was an ancient custom among them (now extinct for generations), according to which they could dispense with burial altogether. Like many uncivilized peoples, in all climates, they had a habit of putting the aged out of the way of the young when they had no more joy in life; and in their own case got rid of them by throwing them down a special one of the numerous precipices in their country. The story goes that the habit came to be stopped through one particular man, who was carrying up his own father to dispose of him in the time-honoured way. As he scaled the mountain, he put down his burden to rest for a minute,{309} at one particular tree; and as he did so, he heard the old man chuckle.

"And what have you got to laugh at now?" said the son.

"Ah well, I was just remembering"; said the old fellow. "It came to my mind how when I was carrying my old father up here, I put him down to rest myself just at this same tree; and it seemed to me rather comic. Your son, little Yaqub, will do just the same with you when your time comes, no doubt."

That set the son, who had hitherto been acting just as custom decreed, thinking about things in a new way. He had to admit that he did not like the idea of his little son carrying him up in this fashion to throw him down a precipice; and perhaps it might be that his own old father did not quite like it either! So the end of his cogitations

was that he carried the old man down again, and faced the horror of refusing to do as his fathers had done. Thus the custom fell into disuse.

Good people in England will of course be startled at the idea of such a custom ever having prevailed among even "nominal Christians;" in blissful ignorance of the fact that our own ancestors acted in very similar fashion when they were at a similar stage of development. Human nature is much the same all the world over; and we believe that the practice of killing off the old people (useless mouths to fill) did not die out in Christian Sweden till the fifteenth century. The "family clubs" used for dispatching them were usually kept in the churches![140]

Note. One of the quaintest of the stories told at the expense of these "Men of Gotham" was related to the writer by Mar Shimun, who is a singularly good raconteur. It befell once in the time of summer that the sun was hidden by clouds. This is so unusual a phenomenon in that favoured land that the men of Tyari held a solemn meeting to discuss what could be done in the matter; and decided that the day-star had probably got entangled in a cave on the lip of their tremendous gorge, and that if it was not disentangled at once disastrous consequences would follow. A deputation went up accordingly to do their best; and the first man to reach the cave mouth at once stooped and looked into the darkness, where he saw two luminous orbs. "It's all right," he said to his friends;{310} "here is the sun and the moon, too. I will crawl in and let them loose." In he crawled accordingly; but found that unluckily for him the lights were the eyes of a leopard, and it, skilful animal, took off his head with one snap. As he did not come out again, or answer to questions, his companions pulled him out by the heels—when, behold, he had no head on. "Dear, dear," said the leader, "this is very odd. Tell me, some of you, had Yukhanan his head with him when we came up, or did he leave it in the house?" No man was quite sure on that point, so all went down to ask his wife. "O Sinji, wife of Yukhanan, say now. Did your man leave his head down here when we went up the hill this morning, for we cannot find it now?" Sinji searched in the house, but presently came out with the news: "It is not here, anyhow." "Ah, well," said the leader, "he must have dropped it on the way up. The boys will find it and bring it down when they drive home the goats at sunset."

{311}

CHAPTER XV

INTRUDERS IN A PANDEMONIUM

(AMADIA AND BOHTAN)

To the south of the Christian cantons of Tkhuma and Salabekan, and separated from them by a series of high rocky ridges, lies the long trough-like valley of Amadia, which is here known alternatively as the Sapna. At its eastern end, as already related, dwell the Sheikhs of Barzan and Neri; but the western portion is divided among a group of petty Kurdish Aghas, who are of course *ashiret* in status like their neighbours, and who occupy both the main Sapna valley itself, the Ghara ranges which form the counterscarp separating it from Mosul plain, and the Berwar valley which lies parallel with it to the northward.

These chiefs, of whom the Mira of Berwar and the Agha of Châl are the principal, are "small men." None of them can claim a personal following of more than a few hundred at most; though one or other may figure prominently at times as the head of a confederacy. Their chronic condition is that of outlawry for proved acts of violence; and in the land of Ghara in particular there does not seem to be a single gentleman of name who is not in that enviable condition—or if there is, we never heard of him in the course of three years' residence. This fact, however, does not in the least affect anyone's comfort, or even the friendliness of his relations with the officials of the Government. It is rather a *cachet* of gentility than otherwise.

Bigger men live to east and west of them; namely our old acquaintance the Sheikh of Barzan, and the Agha of

the Sindigul Kurds, whose name is Abdi. When these men have a disagreement with the Government, it is not a{312} case of mere outlawry, but of open war; and the Government does not always, by any means, get the better of them. Abdi Agha of the Sindigulis is perhaps the better off; for he has a stronghold of the most magnificent description, to which no Government troops have ever penetrated, and which is a fair set-off against the religious prestige of his neighbour. This stronghold is the lofty tableland of Tanina; a great plateau among the mountains where there are wood and water for the whole tribe, and pasture in abundance for all their sheep the whole summer through. It can only be approached, the tale goes (for no foreigner has ever been allowed to visit its summit), by three easily guarded ascents; and when once the tribe are on the top, they can afford to laugh at any force the Government of the district can send against them. A large force set to blockade the place could not be fed in the district, while small detachments guarding the "ports" could be overwhelmed in detail. No doubt resolute troops could storm it; but the cost would be heavy. The only weakness of the sanctuary appears to lie in this; that neither man nor beast can live on the top of it during the winter. When the autumn gales and early snows begin, come down they must; and in this fact would lie the opportunity of a Government that really cared about the enforcement of order.

Throughout the district there are plenty of Christian villages, almost entirely of the Nestorian church, though at the western end of it some belong to the "Jacobite" body. All of these, however, are *rayat* or feudally subordinate, to the Kurdish chiefs among whom they live, and are little better in fact than serfs. The principal town of the land, Amadia, is a fully equipped seat of government, with a *kaimakam*, a lieutenant of gendarmerie, a district judge, and all complete. But his Excellency the Governor knows

better than to issue any order that he thinks likely to be unpleasant to his neighbours.

Thus these second-rate Aghas are left pretty much to the freedom of their own will, and the result is as bad a Government as can well be imagined. An important chief, {313} like the Sheikh of Barzan, may at least tolerate no other tyrant; and may possibly see that killing off the bees is not the best way of getting a permanent supply of honey. But the small men have their own feuds with one another; their train of dependents that must be supported somehow; and, moreover, a total absence of conscience—or even of the enlightened self-interest that is sometimes its working substitute.

As for appealing to the Government for redress against the Agha's misdoings that is entirely wasted labour; and anyone who does so is apt to be given a lesson by the feudal chief, to warn others from doing the like.

A description of some of the actual proceedings of two of the chiefs may enable the reader who has no knowledge of the ways of Ottoman officials in the remoter districts to learn what Turkish rule really means. Reshid, the Mira of Berwar, pays so much lip-deference to the Government's authority that he does condescend to buy from it the right of collecting the taxes from the Christian villages, year by year. This right is usually farmed out by the local officials (the fact that this is expressly illegal has nothing to do with the matter), the contractor paying a fixed sum to the Treasury, and making what he can out of the place. Reshid pays a sum of £5 for each village, which the Treasury gets; and perhaps another £5 goes in *bakhshish*, to secure that there shall be no competition, or that some flaw shall be found in any other offer. Then he extracts some £200 from each village.[141]

It is possible that this is not much more than double the real assessment; still, even so, one would have thought that it might be worth while for the provincial governments to

institute a better system; for when that is done in some thirty villages, it really represents a material loss to a Treasury that is perennially empty. However, you may talk to a Turk till you are tired, and represent to him that his system is simply robbery, and stupid robbery too; and{314} that with better methods he would get ten times as much with one tenth the trouble. You are told politely to your face that you are under a misapprehension; though this ignorance of the country is of course pardonable in a foreigner. What is said or thought privately may perhaps be guessed.

In feuds anything may happen. Thus Mira Reshid has a standing feud, of twenty years date now, with the men of Tyari; which is said to have commenced with a treacherous murder under trust in the Mussulman's own house. It blazed up fiercely in the summer of 1908; and that not without excuse from the Kurd's point of view, for some Tyari hot-heads (angry at the fact that a proposed reconciliation had not come off) had carried out a raid in Berwar territory, and killed Reshid's own brother. That he should cut the bullet out of the corpse, and send word to the chief of the Lizan valley (whence the raiders had come) that he was keeping it to shoot through his heart, was fair enough; but he certainly went beyond all ordinary rules in proclaiming a *Jehad* or holy war of Islam against Christianity, on account of what was at the most a mere tribal feud.

However, all the neighbouring tribes of Kurds rallied at that call, and he was able to muster 8000 men, armed with modern rifles, against the short 1500 flintlocks that was all that the threatened sub-district of Lizan could produce. It says much for the reputation of the Tyari fighters, that even under those circumstances the Kurds dared no frontal attack, and were content to make a long counter-march through the mountains, to reach the head of that Lizan valley (a tributary of the Zab) which the Christians were

defending. Then they marched down it, plundering as they went, while the Christians on the hill above saw their houses go up in smoke one after the other.

There was little spoil to take, for the sheep and women had been prudently sent away to the north; but all the usual courtesies of war went by the board that day. Trees were girdled; houses and standing crops were burnt; irrigating channels broken down so as to ruin the crops in{315} other fields; and the conquerors marched down the valley to fulfil an old threat that they would "dance in St. George's Church on St. George's day," and thereafter carry fire and sword up the main valley of Tyari; which was not directly concerned in the feud.

This last outrage, however, was averted by one daring deed. The church in question stands at the foot of the side valley, close by the bridge over the Zab that forms the sole passage to the larger threatened district. One chief of the Christian mountaineers saw that a band of brave men might throw themselves into a house which commanded both, and save their brethren, even if they themselves were ruined. He called for volunteers who would come down with him and cut across the Kurdish advance in the effort to gain that point. He would only take men who would put their lives on the hazard, for no quarter is given in *Jehad*. He got his party; and the writer must be allowed some pride in the fact that one of the members of this forlorn hope was a pupil of his own, a member of the "English School," named Saypu. They reached their point and prepared for defence; Saypu's last preparation being to take his own school-books out of the house (which, as it happened, was his own home) and hide them in a hole in the rock. It was the first token of affection he had given for them in his life! The little band made good their defence; and as they had not to deal with the main body of their enemy, they were actually able to carry out a sortie on their foes as they retired. Saypu, who had gone into the fight

with a borrowed flint-lock, came out of it with a breech-loader of his own, the fairly won spoil of its late owner! More important than this, however, was the fact that the bridge was held. Though the side-valley was burnt from end to end, the main one was saved from ravage; and the Christians were able to hold their service on the following Sunday in the still undesecrated Church of St. George.

Such an open war as this roused even the Ottoman Government to asking questions; though to do the officials justice, they would have been glad enough to leave the {316} matter alone if only British Embassies and Consulates had left them in peace. As it was, they consented to send a commissioner to somewhere near the district, with instructions to "do *takikat*" in the case. As a matter of etymology, *takikat* means examination or inquiry. As a matter of practice, it means sending an official with instructions to waste time, and do nothing elaborately; while the Government at headquarters says to the interfering foreigner, "you must allow us reasonable space and opportunity for action." After a few months, this phrase is altered; and the reply is, "well, after all, it happened a long time ago, and we cannot go into the matter now." In this case, the commissioner got as far as Amadia, and sent a summons to Reshid to come down and explain his conduct. Reshid sent out five pounds to the messenger, and the information that he was ill in bed, and the gentleman must call again; and this quite satisfied everybody.

This is the sort of procedure that fills a Consul with despair. It is hard enough to get a disciplinary or reforming order out of the central Government; and when you have got it, what better are you? There is no possibility of getting the thing executed. Every Jack-in-office in the Ottoman service knows what is meant by a "watery command"—an order extracted by foreign pressure which he is meant to disregard. They know when the authority

means business, and then they answer the rein at once; but they also know when it does not, and then they do nothing. Foreign influence cannot possibly see to it that there is a Consul in every place where oppression can arise. No Power can keep one in every mudirate; and nothing short of that would be effective. If Turkey is ever to be reformed, it must be by foreigners who have executive as well as advisory authority; power, that is, to hang an official who does not obey orders, or a chief who breaks the peace. Half a dozen such men would have Kurdistan as safe as Hyde Park inside a year, for if there is one chance in twenty of trouble ensuing, the Kurd does not raid.{317}

Reshid's only rival in Berwar is the Agha of Châl,[142] an old man who is the government *Mudir* of his district. He is also a *Sufi* by religious profession; and both of these circumstances should make for respectability; for the *Mudir* is put there to keep order, being lowest on the scale of local governors, and *Sufis* are usually supposed to be quiet mystics. Many of them are so in fact, and most interesting religious philosophers to talk with; but this man is noted for being on the whole the most crafty murderer in the country-side. It is of course something to rise to eminence in a profession so crowded as that peculiar one is locally; but perhaps that is not the most remarkable thing about this particular Agha. He is the only man of the writer's acquaintance who keeps a really large herd of domestic Jews. Châl village is largely populated by men of that race; and they are to all intents and purposes the serfs of the Agha—his tame money-spinners. The writer was even offered full rights in one of them for the sum of five pounds; and if the bargain would have held in more civilized districts (and the vendor, to do him justice, did not realize that it would not), it might have been as profitable an investment as is ever likely to come his way! A Jew of one's very own, bound to put all his financial skill at your disposal, and to use it solely for your benefit,

would be a most valuable property.

There are other chiefs who keep "tame Jews" in this fashion, though not on the same scale as does the wise man of Châl. Naturally, you are expected to protect your own Hebrew, and to guard him against all other oppressors; even as the King of England used to do, when he had absolute property in all the Jews in England, and saw to it that their debtors did not default. Kurdish Aghas, however, do not always rise to this duty; and the writer has known a case, where the unfortunate Israelite, who was owned in this fashion by one Agha, was robbed of every penny and rag he possessed by that Agha's rival.{318} Poor Ibrahim complained, of course, to his natural lord, on the ground that it was *iyba* to that master himself, if his property was robbed in this style. The chief had to admit that there was something in the argument; but redress by force of arms (the obvious method) was impossible, because the robber was far too nearly his equal in strength.

"Your face is blackened my Lord," pleaded the poor Hebrew.

"It is indeed," said the Agha; "but I can't go to war with him notwithstanding."

Presently he had a really brilliant inspiration. "Look here Ibrahim; I have it! I'll go and rob his Jew myself!"

That being the way the Kurdish mind works, it will be readily understood that their unfortunate Christian *rayats* run considerable peril when there happens to be feud between two Aghas. Under those circumstances, it is just as satisfactory on the point of honour—and a good deal more profitable and less risky—to raid your opponents' unarmed Christian villages, than his armed Kurdish ones. Both sides practise this amiable habit with great satisfaction to themselves; and the poor *rayats* suffer accordingly.

The presence of one powerful Kurdish chief ruling a

whole country-side is thus a distinct improvement (however tyrannous he may be) on the rule of several rivals. He may at least have the sense to realize that it is unprofitable to carry the oppression of the *rayats* too far, lest the cattle should be ungrateful enough to die on his hands. A story is told of the brother of the notorious Bedr Khan Beg, that on one occasion when that great destroyer of Christians was meditating a further massacre, he appeared in the *diwan* in labourer's dress, armed with a shovel.

"*Mashallah.* Why this masquerade?" asked his brother the chief.

"Well brother, it is what we shall have to do, if you go on with your game of massacring all Christians. You will leave none to do the work on the land."

The acted parable went home, as so often was the case in biblical times; and the proposed raid was countermanded. {319}

During the Italian and Bulgarian wars, there was of course much heated feeling among Mussulmans, and much wild talk of a massacre of all Christians. A Kurd indulging in that sort of swagger in a Christian village was countered by an argument which naturally no European would have expected, but which we have reason to believe had considerable weight in many quarters.

"Of course, you can massacre us," said an old priest, "we are in your hands. But then, what will King George do?"

"King George!" said the Kurd contemptuously, "his arm does not reach to Kurdistan."

"No, but he has millions of Mussulman *rayats* in India," said the Christian. "If you kill us, think you that he will not take life for life from them?"

The Kurd was staggered. At first, he was disinclined to believe it possible for any Christian King to have

Mussulman *rayats*. But when assured on that point, he quite admitted the probability—and more, the propriety—of King George retaliating on Mussulmans in India for anything their co-religionists might do to Christians in Kurdistan. The Oriental is quite philosopher enough to grasp the notion of *solidarité*.

Moreover it must be inferred that a Kurd has a ghost of a conscience. He does not himself expect to sleep quiet in his grave unless some Christian places a rag on it in token of forgiveness. It is a weird belief, but is fully accepted on all hands. A noted marauder was lately buried near Amadia, and three Tyari men passing his grave after nightfall heard awful groans proceeding from it. One, bolder than his comrades, went nearer, and found an asthmatic sheep. An unlucky discovery, for it utterly ruined the moral.

The character of the country is tamer than that we have just been traversing, for it is only in the most rugged and inaccessible gorges that the *ashiret* Christians have been able to maintain their independence. In these Berwar and Sapna districts, the wilder ranges have been left behind. The valleys are wider, and the hills are usually forest clad; {320} the prevailing tree being a small type of oak. Fortunately this is a valuable crop in itself, for it produces a very large oak-apple; and this is used freely in the dyeing of the local cloth, so that the trees have a good chance of preservation. The colours produced vary, according to the process, from pale yellow to dark brown; but as is always the case with pure vegetable dyes, all are excellent in tone, and a most gratifying contrast to the cold hard aniline dyes that European science has introduced to ruin the once beautiful carpets of this land.

The hills are mostly of limestone, and lie in long parallel ranges, due east and west, with steep crags and precipices on the crests, and long tree-clad slopes below. They gradually lose their elevation as they approach the Mosul

plain; but even at the last stand up over that endless level with a startling abruptness. The rivers, true to their habit in this land of contradictions, burst clean through these ranges in their southern course, though they naturally receive tributaries in each one of the parallels.

Good coal lies under much of this country; the writer having actually seen one six-foot seam that crops out at four several points along a line of sixty miles, and is probably continuous in other directions also. It is of course quite unworked at present. Turkish political economy teaches that for so long as the coal is there, it is safe, and a solid national asset. If, however, you dig it up and burn it, it is gone and cannot be replaced. Besides, mining concessions, or anything else likely to bring in the foreigner, are anathema to the Ottoman and are never granted if they can possibly be avoided.



TRAVELLING IN LOWER TKHUMA.

No. 14

The principal landmark in the Sapna valley is the town of Amadia; a city set on a hill indeed—perched on the summit of a great isolated knoll which juts out from the mountains behind it like a bastion from the curtain of a fortress. The slopes of this knoll are surmounted by a cresting of limestone precipice, so even and continuous

round the whole circuit of the level summit that it looks from a little distance like a prodigious artificial wall. The place must have been a notable stronghold even in Assyrian{321} days, as a much battered bas-relief on the rock face by the main gate testifies: but the ramparts which Nature has given it were always sufficient protection; and, except at the two entrance gateways, no further defences were required. It is now but a group of mean hovels, no more than a rather large village; but it ranks in the Sapna valley as the metropolis of the country-side.

Amadia is the only seat of Ottoman Government in the neighbourhood; and for this reason it was in its vicinity that a "Station" of the Archbishop's Assyrian Mission was established when it was desirable to find some centre reasonably accessible for the mountaineers of Tyari and Tkhuma. This establishment caused a most natural fluttering of the dovecotes in that respectable and old-fashioned neighbourhood. That the Kurds should feel eminently disgusted was only to be expected. Good respectable brigands as they were, and had been for generations, and having a vested interest in the perpetuation of conditions that made their ancient trade profitable; what else could they be expected to feel, at the advent of a Frank who was not only unraidable personally, but whose mere presence made it appreciably more difficult to raid others? Formerly if there had ever been questions about the appropriation of sheep (which did not happen often), it was always easy to persuade the *kaimākām* to do nothing, and report nothing. An Englishman, however, was in touch with his Consul, (accursed institution), and that Consul with the *Vali*; and *Valis* have a way of not sympathizing with a Kurdish gentleman's necessities, unless you purchase that sympathy rather expensively.

Furthermore, there was the Roman Catholic bishop of the district; and he also objected (and again most naturally

and rightly from his point of view) to the coming of an institution that might put backbone into the "heretical" church which he was in process of annexing gradually to the one true fold. We must own that his lordship's methods of going to work in the matter were perhaps a little crude; but the fact is, that it is the grossest injustice to judge the modern East by a twentieth-century standard. If you{322} choose to go and live in mediæval times (somewhere in the thirteenth century let us say), you must not complain if the people act in fashion reminiscent of that age. It is best to cultivate a sense of historical perspective instead, and enjoy the picturesqueness of things.

The bishop in question was not a European himself, but a native of the country, and a member of the Chaldæan Church; and there is not the slightest reason for thinking that his tutors (the Dominican Fathers of Mosul) were aware of his rather mediæval methods. He would not be likely to report too definitely to them (if he had any direct correspondence with them at all, which is not probable) on the broad principle, familiar in that land, that there are things which a Frank can never be got to understand, and which for the sake of his peace of mind he had better not know! His immediate superior, the Chaldæan Patriarch, may have been better informed. He is an Oriental and so of an understanding mind; a vigorous mind withal, and not troubled with needless scruples.

It being then desirable to remove the intruding Englishman, his lordship's first step was to request the *Vali* to issue an order to that effect, on the ground that the writer's morals were so abominably bad, that the Kurds could not tolerate his presence. This attempt failed; the *Vali* taking the line that Kurdish morals were not his business, and that in any case he thought that even an Englishman could hardly make them worse than they were. We regret to say that his Excellency, having given this decision, went to lunch with the British Consul in order to

share the ribald joke.

Foiled there, his lordship the bishop next appealed to the local Kurds. “If you allow that Englishman to settle there” he told them, “he will set the Government on to you, every time you go a-raiding; and you will never be able to rob a Christian village in peace and safety again.” Of course the fact was true enough; or rather, it was true that the foreigner would do his best to produce that desirable result, as far as the narrow limits of his power extended; and it was all to the good that the Kurds should{323} believe it. Still, as an Episcopal argument, it was odd. However, it is the general feeling of the East, that there is no stone too dirty to throw at your enemy; and that if you set a train for his destruction, there is never any risk of your getting hoist with your own petard. It is, after all, only the mediæval feeling, that it was quite fair to call in the devil to do your work, and then cheat him of his pay!

Another argument urged upon the Kurds by the bishop was that the coming of the English meant annexation in the near future. However, this “back-fired” sadly. Many Kurds, after inquiring if the tale was really true, exclaimed: “Glory be to Allah! Let us hope the English will be quicker about it than they sometimes are.” For a very fair proportion of the men in every tribe are really sick of the state of no-government around them. They are tired of disorder, more than tired of the Turk; and have discovered that raiding really does not pay in the long run. Good sport it is; but the outgoings are too heavy. No raids will pay for the up-keep of a large “following” for ever; and yet if you practise raiding, a large following must be kept up. So, unable to establish any sort of government other than the tribal themselves, they are disposed to welcome almost any change, or the intervention of almost any foreigner. Though, of course, however welcome a foreigner might be at first, he would be sure to get cordially hated later when the sweets of order palled in their turn.

Some Kurdish gentlemen were disposed to welcome the coming of the English for other and more personal reasons. Among these was a certain Agha Reshid of Ghara (a distinct man from his namesake of Berwar) whose fame as a murderer rivalled even that of the Agha of Châl. This distinguished man came to visit us one day, sadly scaring our household staff by the train that he thought necessary for his dignity; and perhaps for his safety also, for both the Government and his private enemies had designs upon him.

"Will you receive him, Rabbi?" said the servants, "he is the man who has committed fifteen murders himself."

He proved, however, to be, like Lambro, "as mild a mannered{324} man as ever scuttled ship or cut a throat;" and after the usual compliments, disclosed his real business. "Could we see our way to registering him as a British subject?" The fact was, as he explained, that his enemies were getting quite troublesome to him now, over the crimes they said he had committed; and if we could oblige him in this, then he would be entitled to Consular protection, and that would give him a clean slate. As usual, in return for that favour he would cheerfully undertake the removal of any enemies of ours whom we named.

We could only regret our inability to do him the service asked, and explain that there was really nobody whom we wished to have murdered; a statement which in the light of our known relations to our neighbours was received with an incredulity that was courteous, but quite undisguised. In the interests of science, however, we had to put one further question. "O Agha, that thing which your enemies say of you concerning those fifteen murders; is it true at all?"

"O *Effendim*," he answered coolly; "they were all of them my enemies but two. And one of them was a Jew who had looked at my womankind."

We could not come to an understanding, but we parted

the best of friends.[143]

As for the Christian villagers, they of course welcomed the arrival of what promised protection, and refused to believe any disclaimers of political power and aims. “Now we shall be able to send out our sheep to the far pastures,” they proclaimed. To do so previously would have been a mere invitation to cattle-raiders, which they would not have been slow to accept!

The person who was most to be pitied in the whole matter was the unfortunate Governor of Amadia. He had to veil under a decent show of politeness the disgust that he must have felt over the advent of a nuisance whom he was bound to protect; and a critic whom he could not turn out, or{325} altogether disregard. Further, all his Kurdish neighbours who desired the removal of the foreigner were sure that the governor could do it if he would; and that he would have done so, had he not been bribed in a contrary sense.

One can spare some pity for a poor man who finds himself losing his popularity with his friends for not doing what he would give his ears to do, if only he were able. Constant petitions were made to him to expel the foreigner; and when in a weak moment he tried to purchase peace by issuing an order to that effect, the impracticable Englishman not only refused to obey it, but appealed to his Consul; and so brought down on him a sharp reprimand from the *Vali*, and a reminder of the existence of the “Capitulations” and foreign privileges under them. Yet how was he to get that fact into a Kurd’s understanding?

Finding that the poor *kaimákam* was not to be moved, the neighbours thought of taking action themselves. A syndicate of them actually suggested a reward of £1000 to anyone who would abate the nuisance by removing the foreigner finally and absolutely from this world. Sundry gentlemen were willing to undertake the job; so at least local informants assured us. Maybe their fears spoke, but

the thing has been done with British officers since. This syndicate, however, declined to produce the money till the job was done; and negotiations broke down on that point, leaving the Englishman with the satisfaction of feeling that he was at least rated quite decently high. It would have been a blow to his natural self-esteem had the price put on his head been a low one; but £1000 elevates one into an aristocratic circle, to a fellowship with Claude Duval, Ned Kelly the Australian, "the man Charles Stuart" and "the Nigger General who almost ruined old Virginny."

Meantime, the British Consul in Mosul felt a little natural anxiety at these proposals concerning one of his charges, and communicated with a friend on the matter. This friend was that Abdi Agha of the Sindiguli Kurds mentioned earlier in this chapter, who was on the most amicable terms with all English, because his daughter had just been cured in the English hospital in Mosul. The Consul's suggestion ran{326} much as follows. "See here my friend; you know those men of Amadia are talking wildly and making petitions. Could you, who have influence with them, give them a hint that they are knocking their heads against a stone wall? You know we none of us want to have trouble; but I shall be obliged to take serious notice if they go too far."

"Certainly Bey, on my head and eyes be it," said the obliging Agha; and this was the form in which the "hint" arrived. "O you men of Amadia! Dogs that you are, I hear that you are barking against my English friends. Know now that if you do not cease from this forthwith, I will rob every caravan of yours that goes down to Mosul!"

Application had been made at Constantinople for a *firmān* for the building of a mission house, and this business was proceeding with the leisureliness characteristic of Ottoman rule. A curious episode occurred during its progress. The British Consul of Mosul, having naturally left that oven during the summer, had come up to

Amadia; and was there staying with the writer on the site of the future house, when a Servian gipsy appeared in the land. This was an old woman, who was unable to speak any one of the numerous languages current in Kurdistan, and communicated with the natives by signs only. The Consul's kavass, however, was a Montenegrin, and through him we were able to communicate with her. She professed herself a skilled fortune-teller, and accordingly, more by way of challenge than anything else, she was asked to show her skill. She asked for anything that the Consul had worn, and having been given a fragment of an old neck-tie, cut it into shreds, strewed these on the surface of some water, and presently, after studying the signs, gave her verdict. "You have come up hither about the building of a large house on this spot, and there has been a great deal of opposition to it. However, you need not be afraid, for you have overcome it, and the house will be built and will abide." About six weeks later came the news that the issue of the *firmān* for the purpose was practically secured.

Another curious instance of clairvoyance came to the knowledge of the writer in the same village. A child was{327} lost, and after searching for it in vain, the parents applied to a certain aged *qashâ*, renowned for his skill in *kharashutha* (magic) of all kinds. His method was to take a pebble from a running stream, and grind it to powder with certain prayers. Then a long series of names of localities was written on slips of paper, and these and the dust together were strewn on a basin of water taken from the running stream. Again prayers were recited, ending with the invocation, "give a perfect lot;" and the slip of paper that first floated to the side was taken. The place it named seemed impossible; for it was a pass between two high mountains, very difficult of access. Still the parents went up to search; and there sure enough was found the dead body of the child, who, in obedience to the mysterious law observed in several such cases, had climbed from height to

height, when lost, till he sank exhausted.

A better position than Amadia for getting unusual knowledge as to the ways of life and thought in this remote land could hardly be imagined; particularly when, as was the case with us, medical practice was added to educational work. This was done partly out of philanthropy, partly because nothing is so efficient as dosing to take away prejudice! Weird complaints came to us for doctoring, as will readily be understood; and possibly the treatment they received would have been considered even weirder from a real doctor's point of view.[144] Thus the village idiot came up one day to beg for a cure. He knew that he was mad, and he also knew the reason; namely that long ago an unscrupulous foe had put a donkey's brains into his soup, and he had eaten them unwittingly, and had naturally gone crazy.

We thought of setting imagination to cure what imagination had created, by solemnly tying our friend down, making a small wound on his stomach, and then exhibiting some scrap of raw meat to him as the donkey's brain, safely extracted. We have known of similar cases cured by precisely that method elsewhere; particularly a girl in Mosul{328} who was persuaded that she had swallowed a lizard, which was eating her up internally. She fully intended to die of it; but recovered perfectly on being chloroformed and being shown, on "coming to" again, a small cut on her own person, and a lizard in spirits! However, the patient in this case refused to submit to the operation, and perhaps it was as well; for one is rather playing with fire in executing such a scheme.

On another occasion, a Kurd came to one of our European staff, with a request to have a tooth extracted. The Frank, who had served some apprenticeship at that art, did his office deftly; and the Kurd, filled with gratitude, offered two mejids (seven shillings) as a fee. This was refused, as no fees were taken; and the patient was even

more astonished. However, he was a Mussulman gentleman, and to receive a benefit without making return for it was unthinkable; hence if his next proposal was bizarre, at least the kindness was genuine.

"Look here, *Effendim*, you are a Christian, are you not? Well, when I get to Paradise, I shall have seventy houris. You will not have any where you are going; and I think I may spare you—two!"

An interesting corollary to the above proposition would seem to be that the market value of a houri is $^{3}/_{6}$ sterling, plus compound interest on that sum for say twenty years, which seems cheap.

Perhaps our most remarkable patient, however, was a poor fellow who was brought in by a deputation of the men of his village, with a request that we would cure him of the evil eye! If he looked at a crock of milk, it upset; if at a sheep, the wolf got it; if at a child, it was likely enough to tumble into the fire. They were quite fair about the matter, fully recognizing that it was the poor fellow's misfortune, not his fault. Still, he was such a nuisance to all the neighbours, that it was to be hoped that English knowledge would cure him. Unfortunately, we had to own that there was nothing in the British Pharmacopœia that professes to deal with this form of trouble; and though we had, as a matter of fact, plenty of charms against the evil{329} eye in our possession (invocations of the Archangel Gabriel against "that light and vile daughter of perdition" with power to send it away "into the desolate land, where cocks crow not and foot of beast treads not, there to walk up and down in dry places, seeking rest and finding none") yet we felt on the whole that it would not be proper to use these, and the deputation had to go away disappointed.[145]

Once, on a journey, we have known surgical aid demanded in rather menacing fashion. We had halted by a spring, when a party of Kurds, all fully armed of course, turned up from the opposite direction, and demanded of

our servant who and what we might be. Hearing that we were English, the leader strode over to us at once, displayed a paralysed arm, and observed, "You have got to cure that."

"That is quite beyond our power, we fear," said we, "you must take that to the hospital in Mosul."

"Well you know, I think you ought to cure it; because you did it."

"We did it? We never set eyes on you before."

"Well, if it was not you, it was your Consul; but you English are all one set. He did it when he was shooting at us."

Our friend was, as we then understood, one of the gang who had, a few years previously, attacked a British Consul in this neighbourhood.[146] There had been a pretty sharp skirmish, of which this gentleman bore the token in a bullet that had cut the sinews of his right arm. The Consul gained great *kudos* in the affair; for he not only beat off his assailants,{330} but killed their leader, a man who had the reputation of being "proof" against shot and steel. Such reputations are almost as common in these regions now as they were in the highlands of Scotland in the seventeenth century; but (in spite of the local facilities) the possessors of such immunity are not held to have acquired it by direct compact with the Evil One, like Claverhouse and Dalziel, but to have been born with it in course of nature. Mirza Agha, the Kurd in question, certainly did his best to live up to his character; for though he received three wounds that would each have been fatal to most men (two in the head, and one in the body) he did not die until the fifth day after the battle.

This comrade of his was not disposed to take vengeance (as might perhaps have been expected) on all and sundry Englishmen for the loss of his arm. Having expressed his sense of what was befitting, and provided us with an

instance of the survival of tribal responsibility, for which as students of history we were bound to be grateful to him, he went on his way and we saw him no more.

Gradually our relations with our neighbours improved. It is difficult to keep up malice against a man who provides good "English salt" (quinine); and thus folk became interestingly, but almost inconveniently, friendly. What ought one to do, when the wife of a Kurd, who has got into trouble with his Agha, asks for your intercession; and all the Christians in the neighbourhood, as well as the man's own friends, assure you that the object of their prayer is a very good and charitable man, barring the fact that he commits murders occasionally? What is the really "fit and beautiful" in the following cause matrimonial, when the applicants come and throw themselves in the road at your horse's feet, and declare that you are welcome to ride over them, but get up they will not, till you have promised them redress?

Jevdet, a worthy Kurd of Ghara (outlaw, of course, like every man in that happy Alsatia), betrothed his daughter Amin to a neighbour, Tewfik, in settlement of a debt owed{331} to the latter.[147] However, Amin rebelled and ran away to a worthy old man of Amadia, one Abd-l-Aziz, who is a sort of universal uncle to all the neighbourhood, and is at the bottom of most local intrigues. Abd-l-Aziz, resourceful man, thought that an alliance with the damsel's family would be valuable; so he betrothed her at once to a nephew of his own, and reported her to her parents as "lost, and I don't know where to find her." Presently, however, Amin, being a lady, changed her mind—mollified by the news that Tewfik had actually spent the sum of £20 to get possession of her—and got a letter through to him somehow, begging him to come like a true lover, and rescue her from the consequences of her own actions. Under these circumstances Jevdet and Tewfik both came and threw themselves at the feet of the writer and the

Consul, assured us that they had no hope save in Allah and ourselves, and begged for redress!

Yet of all the negotiations in which we were engaged, that which sticks most in our memory is the matter of Abdurrahman the Kurd, and the difficulty first of getting him into prison and afterwards of getting him out. Abdurrahman had the impudence to rob a messenger who was bringing down letters to us. He took everything except the letters themselves (which was courteous) and allowed the messenger to come wading through the winter snow to our house, clad in nothing but the envelope.

This was a thing that could not be allowed to pass, and we demanded the arrest and imprisonment of the thief, who was known to the robbed man. At first the governor professed inability to do anything in the matter, and did not see that any duty was incumbent on him. However, an appeal to the *Vali* at Mosul produced an order, and in due course Abdurrahman was lodged in the town gaol. "Get him imprisoned here, not at Mosul, Rabbi!" had been the advice of one of our servants. "It is no punishment to be imprisoned at{332} Mosul; they give bread to the captives there *almost every day*." In more primitive Amadia your friends are at liberty to supply you; but if they omit that attention, you do not eat.

Abdurrahman had plenty of friends, so he did not fare badly in the prison; but when he had been there about a week, we received a message from the *kaimakam*. Would we mind saying if our thirst for vengeance was glutted yet? For if so, our victim might be released. We sent a reply to the effect that it was no case of private vengeance, but of the peace of his Majesty the Sultan; and that if, as we presumed, Abdurrahman had now served his full sentence, of course he could be released.

"Oh no," replied the ever-courteous but bored Governor, "our wisdom was labouring under a misapprehension in this. As for the peace of the Sultan, his Majesty had not got

any; and as for sentence, he had never even tried the man yet. In fact, he had been at some pains to explain to our victim's relations (a fairly wild sept of Kurds) that it was not his fault that their kinsman was in durance, but purely the doing of that Englishman, who had insisted on it so."

"Then release him with our blessing," said we. "Ten days in the hole you call a prison is more than enough for a trifling indiscretion such as he committed."

"Then please," came the message in reply, "would we mind coming up to the town to sign a document to that effect?" It had been already prepared, and only needed signature, and a man of our wisdom would understand that this was necessary, and that in a civilized and constitutional land like Turkey, the formalities of law must be observed.

It seemed to us that no great formality could be needful for the release of a man who had never been tried; but presently we sacrificed a day's work, rode up to the citadel and after the usual compliments asked for the necessary document.

"Well, for the document—it should be written at once. It was not indeed needful that we should sign it, or in fact that any should be written; but—well, as we were there—would we take it amiss if the *kaimakam* mentioned that he{333} had been suffering sadly from stomach-ache these days, and would be grateful if we would prescribe." The rascal had calculated, quite correctly, that we should never trouble to come up just for his indigestion, but that if we knew that our victim was languishing in durance till we appeared, we were pretty certain to do so! The ingenuity of the "score" so delighted us, that the only revenge we took was to prescribe the nastiest medicine at our disposal; and so the document was drawn up, signed, sealed and delivered, and we went off home in the belief that the business was done now.

No such thing, however. The policeman, who presently came down to take up the medicine informed us that it was impossible to release our captive, for the sufficient reason that his Excellency had now been examining the case, and had come to the conclusion that he was innocent. Had he been guilty, all would have been well; but he thought that it was a case of mistaken identity, and proposed to keep poor Abdurrahman till the messenger could come down to swear to him. If that messenger came as soon as he was summoned (the very last thing he was likely to do) that would not mean a delay of more than a fortnight. And then the prisoner could be released—if innocent, on the ground that he had done nothing; if guilty, as having served his full sentence several times over!

On this, we frankly threw up the game, and sent word to the Governor that we were going off on a six weeks' journey, and could not be heard of till its close. He might keep his prisoner, or ours, in prison till the crack of doom if he liked; or might release him at once.

Naturally, as soon as we were over the hill, he chose the latter alternative. Abdurrahman came out again; and he bore so little malice that on return we found a message from him awaiting us, to the effect that he would never have meddled with the messenger had he known that the man belonged to us; and that he would bring us the horns of the first ibex he shot that summer as a peace-offering. And so, in fact, he did, and we became very good friends.

Spirits of the mountain and plain beset the path of the{334} wayfarer in this land, as might be expected. Thus, Mosul plain is haunted by a fearful type of vampire, the "*hiblabashi*," a satyr, half-man half-goat, who lures travellers from the path, and sucks their blood.[148] There is a tomb of one such at Aradin, a village in the lower hills, whence there issues at times a terrible gadfly, that infects all whom it bites with madness and hydrophobia. Mercifully, however, bane and antidote lie, as ever, side by

side; for there is a sulphurous spring by the side of the tomb, and it has healing virtue for those afflicted in this way.

Belief in a vampire was, of course, practically universal at some period all the world over; and this is the only thing that the Montenegrin kavass mentioned above was ever known to fear, having had practically first-hand acquaintance with one.[149] There is, however, another sort of spirit that is more peculiar to this land; a type of "brownie" that haunts the sheepfolds, where the shepherds have often to keep lonely vigil and get into the frame of mind when men see all sorts of strange things. In one case, the pixy in question used to come and sit opposite to the shepherd by the watchfire, and exactly imitate his every action in dead silence. At last this supernatural companion got on to the shepherd's nerves. He consulted a wise man, and was given advice that shows how recent in date the tale must be. He put a bowl of water on his side of the fire, and a bowl of paraffin on the other; and then, when the brownie came, he proceeded to soak his own clothes with the water. The being, of course, imitated him, and did not perceive the difference between water and oil. After a while, the shepherd took a blazing brand from the fire and applied it to his clothes, where, of course, it went out. The brownie did likewise, and found himself in a blaze; on which he jumped up and fled howling, being apparently material enough to feel fire. All the other spirits of mountain and river gathered at his call, and the shepherd began to fear that he had roused Elfindom in good earnest: but the scorched one, with{335} really magnificent fairness, declared that after all it was his own doing; and thereafter the shepherd was left unmolested of nights.

Still, of all survivals from early ages in this land, whether monumental, superstitious, or religious, none is more remarkable than the "Sacrifice of Noah." It must be understood that no people here, save the Armenians, look

on the great cone which we call Ararat, but which is locally known as Aghri Dagh, as the spot where the ark rested. The biblical term is "the mountains of Ararat" or Urartu, and the term includes the whole of the Hakkiari range. A relatively insignificant ridge, known as Judi Dagh, is regarded as the authentic spot by all the folk in this land; and it must be owned that the identification has something to say for itself. It is one of the first ranges that rise over the level of the great plain; and if all Mesopotamia (which to its inhabitants was the world) were submerged by some great cataclysm, it is just the spot where a drifting vessel might strand.

Whatever the facts, the tradition goes back to the year A.D. 300 at least. That date is, of course, a thing of yesterday in this country; but the tale was of unknown antiquity then, and is firmly rooted in the social consciousness now. In consequence, Noah's sacrifice is still commemorated year by year on the place where tradition says the ark rested—a *ziaret* which is not the actual summit of the mountain but a spot on its ridge. On that day (which, strange to say, is the first day of Ilul, or September 14 of our calendar, and not May 27 mentioned in the account in Genesis) all faiths and all nations come together, letting all feuds sleep on that occasion, to commemorate an event which is older than any of their divisions.

Christians of all nations and confessions, Mussulmans of both *Shiah* and *Sunni* type, Sabaeans, Jews, and even the furtive timid Yezidis are there, each group bringing a sheep or kid for sacrifice; and for one day there is a "truce of God" even in turbulent Kurdistan, and the smoke of a hundred offerings goes up once more on the ancient altar. Lower down on the hillside, and hard by the Nestorian village of Hasana, men{336} still point out Noah's tomb and Noah's vineyard, though this last, strange to say, produces no wine now. The grapes from it are used exclusively for

nipukhta or grape treacle, possibly in memory of the disaster that once befell the Patriarch.

Yezidi legend has it that the ark had a narrow escape of foundering during its voyage to Judi Dagh, and what would have befallen the race of man then? It bumped sadly on mount Sinjar, and sprung a serious leak in consequence. [150] Disaster was only averted by the promptitude of the Serpent, who wriggled into the hole, coiled himself into a ball on each side, and then pulled together tightly like a rivet to caulk the leak. There he remained till the voyage was over; whereupon Noah (with rather doubtful gratitude) sacrificed and burnt him at once. He must have left a brood behind him, to be the ancestors of the present stock; but he perished, and he got his revenge, for from his ashes came forth fleas. It is at least an unusual thing to find a story of any sort that attributes disinterested conduct to a serpent; and this legend can claim, at any rate, such support as is given to it by the great abundance of the insect referred to in the neighbourhood of this their original home.

An American sufferer once assured the writer of his conviction that in the course of ages, the very structure of the sandbank on which stands the town of Jezireh (just at the foot of Judi Dagh, and on the river Tigris) had been metamorphosed; and that it was now composed exclusively of flies, fleas, and fever microbes in approximately equal proportions! Experience, it must be admitted, makes one disposed to agree with him. The town is “more Lord of Fleas than any place in Kurdistan.”

Fhairshon had a son
Who married Noah's daughter.

And it is gratifying to find that the memory of this mythical personage is still preserved in the land where he wooed his{337} bride. Noah's son-in-law (so we are told) was a giant of such prodigious stature that his attempt at "spoiling ta' flood by drinking up ta' water" may have had some initial success. Of course he could not get inside the ark, but he obligingly sat astride of it, and paddled it about with his feet. What became of him later the legend sayeth not. No doubt he carried off his wife to Scotland with him; and so passed beyond local ken.

Time passed gradually at Amadia, till even the leisurely Ottoman processes were complete, and the imperial *firmān* for the building of an "English house" at that centre was duly issued. All ill-feeling with our neighbours had practically died out before that date; and the last of it vanished with the document's arrival, every Sanballat and Geshem in the neighbourhood coming to call, and to explain how delighted he personally had always been to have us there, and how it was only "those others" who stirred up bad blood. It is true that one more consistent man observed, on the occasion of the public reading of the formal charter in the *diwan* of the governor, "Poor Mohammed Reshid! *He* has to do whatever these Franks tell him"; but he prudently kept that remark under his breath.

A solemn festival marked the burying of the hatchet; after which the guests, having consumed more than one sheep between them, went home in procession with all the spoons of the household in their hats! This would have suggested at home that the wearers had dined not only well, but too well; but in Kurdistan it expresses no more than an unusual satisfaction with the banquet.

Note. Much of the district of Bohtan (a region which lies to the westward of the Sapna valley) is practically unknown to Europeans; being inhabited only by wild tribes of Kurds, with a scattering of Christians mostly of the Nestorian Church, as their *rayats*. It is extremely rugged, and the gorges of the River Bohtan are among the very finest to be found even in that land.

The following tale of one of its inhabitants is worthy of record, as showing the heroism and fidelity that can be exhibited at times by this downtrodden people.

The writer was anxious to visit the Nestorian villages of the district and had arranged with the Patriarch that he should do so; but found the scheme vetoed by the British Consul of Van, on the ground that "I have been speaking to the *Vali* on the matter, and he says that two{338} companies of soldiers would not be enough to guard you there." Under these circumstances he abandoned the journey; but Rabban Werda, a deacon of the Nestorian Church, already mentioned in these pages, then volunteered to go alone into the district and see what he could do for the people there. He volunteered with, of course, full knowledge of the fact that, though there would at all events be questions asked if the Englishman got shot, nobody would trouble about such a trifle as the death of a mere *rayat* like himself.

He went and he returned safely; and in the course of his journey he visited a village called Shernakh, where he received hospitality as usual in the house of the Agha, but was surprised to find himself treated with more consideration than is the general lot of a Christian wanderer under the circumstances.

While he was at supper, one of the Kurdish servants came to him to say: "Sir Priest, if you have finished, the Lady would wish to speak to you." "The Lady?" said the deacon, in natural wonder at the Lady of a Mussulman house asking to see a Christian guest who was not even a Frank doctor. "The Lady. Our Christian Lady," said the Kurd; and in absolute bewilderment the deacon allowed himself to be led to the women's part of the house, and to a private room in it. Here an aged woman rose to greet him, saying: "God has given me my prayer at last, and, after sixty years of captivity, I see a Christian priest before I die."

Her story was as follows: When a girl in her 'teens she had been carried off from her home as part of the spoil in some raid, like the little maid who waited on Naaman's wife; and had been assigned as a portion of his share to the grandfather of the then Agha of the village. The date was fixed in her mind, by the fact that the first task given her in her captivity was the baking of bread for the Kurds who were

going on a great raid against her own kinsfolk—the raid of Bedr Khan Beg in 1845, which is an episode from which men date still.

Since then, she had been a captive and slave in the Mussulman house, the only Christian in the place. She had begun, as might be expected, as the fag and drudge of all the other servants; but had raised herself by sheer force of character and her own integrity till she was now manager of household and farm: and she had been, by the Kurds' own admission, "a blessing to the house" since the day that she entered it. Further (information again volunteered by the Kurds themselves) she had not only kept her Christianity in her solitude, but in a household where all lived in common nobody had ever known her to neglect her daily prayers or her Friday's fast, or to do needless work on the Sunday.

One request only she made of the deacon. Finding that he was not the priest she had thought, and therefore was not able to give her the "*qurbana*" she had hoped to receive, she asked him to give her some of the "blessed bread" which her memory told her he would be likely to have with him. This is bread blessed, but not consecrated, at the Eucharist, and often carried with them by Nestorians on a long journey. This he was able to do, and she declared that she would keep it to be her "*viaticum*" when the time of her release should come.

Surely one may seek through a good many of the "Acta Sanctorum" before finding a nobler confession of Christ than that made by this nameless Nestorian woman.

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CHAPTER XVI

THE GRAVES OF DEAD EMPIRES

(MOSUL TO BAGHDAD)

THE road from Amadia to Mosul is tolerably easy, by comparison, as the successive ranges sink gradually toward the Mesopotamian level. We had timed our journey craftily; it being now fairly hot in the lowlands; for we wished the moon to be full on the night that we emerged from the mountains, so that we might travel by her light

across the plain to Mosul. A journey by day across the Mosul plain is not to be undertaken too lightly in summer, when the thermometer registers 120° in the shade. By night it is comfortable enough, and the moon makes the journey easy; though we own that it is very sleepy work at times. On this occasion the writer accomplished a feat that had previously been always beyond him, viz. that of sleeping in the saddle as the horse walked on. The nap can hardly have been a long one, but he achieved a real dream, and it was not terminated by a collapse into the dust.

By day, the heat is very trying, and there is a real danger occasionally in that strange phenomenon the "*Sâm*." This is apparently a very small whirlwind, akin to those which cause the "dust-devils" common enough in the land at all times, but composed of intensely heated air, flavoured often with sulphurous fumes. A man struck by it simply collapses, and unless prompt attendance can be given him he dies in a few minutes. The face is "blackened," and decomposition sets in very speedily. The natives not unnaturally refer to it as a "Poison wind."

The phenomenon wanders about in the freakish fashion that we associate with the American tornadoes, though it{340} never is dangerous, like them, from its mere pace and power. It will take one man out of a straggling party, or even a man on horse-back, while leaving his horse and his companion on foot unscathed.

A British Consul has told the writer how on one occasion, turning to speak to his kavass who was riding a few yards behind him, he suddenly felt the hot blast and smelt the sulphurous fumes; while the kavass collapsed, and fell from his horse as if he had been shot. Prompt attention and stimulants revived the sufferer on that occasion, but it was a narrow escape. Had he been alone he would have died past question.

Nobody seems to have investigated the matter scientifically, or to have compared it with like phenomena

in other lands (such as Scinde for instance) where conditions are similar. It is really not surprising that the natives should put down the effect to a blow from a malignant "Jinn," though one suspects that as a matter of fact the explanation is this. Sudden contact with the heated, sulphur-laden blast of the little whirlwind just "tips the balance," and induces a stroke of heat-apoplexy in cases where the victim is already verging on that condition. Possibly the *Sâm* is a last legacy of the now quiescent volcanoes; for similar sulphurous eddies, of a far less violent description, were playing about the surface of the sea off the Riviera coastline for some time after the great earthquake at San Remo in 1887.

In Mosul the hospitable Consulate received us once more, while the *keleg* that was to take us down the Tigris to Baghdad was in process of construction. A *keleg* is probably one of the most ancient types of river craft in the world, and is built in this wise. First, a frame of light poles, much like hop-poles, is tied fairly firmly together with cord. This may be of any size, but a fair-sized one for a small party is perhaps twelve feet square. Next a number of sheep-skins, each taken from the animal with the minimum of cutting, and with all apertures firmly tied up, are fastened beneath that frame. A *keleg* of the size named requires about 100 skins. These are inflated by the lungs of the{341} *kelegji*, through a reed inserted into one of the legs of the skin; and the legs also form convenient points for attachment to the frame. Finally a few heavy logs, usually poplar or walnut trunks sawn in half, are placed side by side on the frame, so as to form a rough floor, and the craft is complete in all essentials. In our own particular case some further arrangements were made for comfort. A portion of the "deck" was properly floored with boards, and this portion covered with a hut made of reed mats on a light frame, large enough to contain a bed easily, and to serve as living-room during the day.

Such a craft is as buoyant as well can be; this one carrying six men with ease, beside a fair amount of luggage. Its method of progress is simply to drift down the fairly rapid current of the Tigris as far as is required. On reaching the destination, all the wood is sold for what it will fetch to the timber merchants, while the skins are deflated and packed on a donkey for transport up the river, for there is no means of towing the craft back against the stream. A pair of clumsy oars do what steering is necessary, and keep the vessel in the main current.

A raft voyage is probably the most absolutely restful mode of travel known, if only the wanderer is in no hurry to reach his destination; and that of course no genuine traveller ever ought to be. You go on, never hasting, never halting (unless a strong wind happens to pin you to one bank for a while), and the river must get you to your destination at the last. As to dates there is a pleasing uncertainty; but we may say that from Mosul to Baghdad the quickest voyage ever known was two days and a half, and the longest fourteen.

Naturally, you provision your craft for the voyage before starting, getting all that you desire in Mosul; and it may be noted here that for cooking purposes the writer has found nothing better than a “Primus” stove. Ports of call where you can reprovision are not numerous, but they do exist.

For one desiring a rest-cure the method may be recommended confidently. You lie on your camp bed under the{342} shade of your grass hut, watching the shore slide past your sleepy eyes. If the heat grows too great, your servant dashes water over the grass matting, and you are cool. Is fruit your desire? He emits a doleful howl, which is answered from the bank, and presently a nude cultivator turns up alongside, buoyed up on the inflated skin on which he has swum out, and towing a large melon from one of the gardens that line the river, which conveniently floats just awash. Is a bath desirable? You

strip and slide off the edge of your *keleg*, taking a sheep-skin to act as buoy, or pillow if you like. You swim for as long as you feel inclined, or drift down while the craft keeps pace with you. You are in the land of the lotus eaters on a *keleg* voyage—but you had better take a few books to read!

Altogether the writer fully sympathizes with the feeling of a Chaldæan bishop, who was scandalized at discovering that a certain Dominican Father held himself excused from observing Lent during a voyage of this kind "because he was on a journey." "Why, good gracious," said his lordship, "he might as well claim exemption from fasting in Paradise!"

It must be owned that there is not much in the way of scenery in this portion of the river. If you want that, you must go to the upper reaches of the Tigris, and travel from Diarbekr down to Mosul, threading the great gorges *en route*.[151] There you will get magnificence, and it may be excitement too; for there are rapids in the defile, and *kelegs* have been known to be wrecked in them. Mesopotamia does not give you mountains. Still, there is one stretch of fair scenery (though not a gorge to be compared with the canons of Tyari), where the "Jebel Makdul" crosses the river, and a fine stretch of dull red cliff, relieved by a wide streak of grey alabaster, lines the bank for some miles. Here stands a fine old stronghold, much resembling one of the Rhine castles, the "Kalat-el-Bint," or Maiden Castle. Shortly after, you pass a sulphur spring, which is not an{343} uncommon thing in the land; still, it is not often that you find one so odoriferous as to awake the peaceful slumberer in mid-stream!

Somewhat lower, the lesser Zab joins the Tigris, descending from a city that we visited at one period of our wanderings in the land, and of which we include a picture.

This is Kirkuk, a town which contains, in its present name, one of the few memorials of the old Seleucid rulers.

It is a contraction of "Karka d'Bait Seluk," the "Citadel of the house of Seleucus." As a city, it is far older than the kingdoms of Alexander's successors, for it stands on one of the largest and most ancient of "tels"; and the traveller may "acquire merit" by visiting the mosque where are the tombs of Shadrach and Abednego. Meshach, the guide will tell you, is there too, but the site of his grave has unfortunately been forgotten.

The mosque of the picture, however, is not that of the tombs, but the *tekke*, or hermitage where dwelt the most famous character of modern Kirkuk. This was a Kurdish Sheikh of such surpassing sanctity and zeal for Islam, that Abdul Hamid used to correspond with him in a private cipher; and was accustomed to ask by telegraph for his prayers, whenever he was meditating anything exceptionally black.

Normally, the banks of the river are high, or at least appear so in autumn. No doubt the river is often bank full in springtime when the snows are melting, and its pace is then materially faster. Generally the only feature on the shores are the primitive irrigating machines, the "*sakkiyehs*," a type that cannot have altered very much since the days of Abraham. They consist of nothing but pits sunk in the high bank down to water-level, and communicating with the stream, so that there is always water in them. A skin bucket is lowered into the pit and dragged up again by a cord passing over a pulley; and an ox walking to and fro on an inclined plane supplies the motive power.

Two or three days below Mosul the river passes by one point of great interest; the mounds of Kala Shargat, once Assur, the sacred city of Assyria. These are now being {344} excavated and examined thoroughly by German savants of the Deutsche Orientalische Gesellschaft. As seen from a little distance, the place has no very exciting appearance. It rather resembles a group of exaggerated sandhills, rising at

one point into a blunt pyramid, the "*Ziggurat*." In spring the plain is covered with flowers, but all these have vanished long before autumn, and the colour of the whole is that of pale brown paper; the only scrap of green being the rather discouraged-looking garden at the side of the house occupied by the excavating staff.

Here hospitable and kindly gentlemen receive the traveller most warmly, and we have the opportunity of seeing German perseverance at work on a most congenial task. Their method is undeniably thorough, and suggests unlimited resources. You have a set of mounds before you, covering perhaps twenty acres or more, and rising to a height of about eighty feet. A light railway is laid down, running well out into the desert; and the whole of those mounds, or something like it, goes through a fine sieve, and is carried off into the wilderness and dumped. When a pavement is reached in this process, that level is cleared absolutely, and everything worth preserving is preserved, with careful plans showing the position in which it was found. Then that pavement is broken up, and progress made to the next level; and so the work is continued till virgin soil is reached.

Assur, it would seem, was a shrine long before "Assyria went out of Babylon and builded Nineveh." There are unmistakable signs of a Hittite occupation before them. It was news to the writer that this people had ever penetrated so far to the east and south. When the place fell into Assyrian hands it became their great sacred city; so that almost every king of whom there is record seems to have felt bound to leave there some mark of his reign. Even the latest of the line, Sinsariskun, who ruled for a few weeks only before the Medes stormed Nineveh, and who perished in the flames of his palace, has done some building here. Hence there is a series of at least seven temples on the site; though in each case the lines of the original foundation were{345} faithfully followed, and are preserved above

ground now in the Arabian "*kala*" which occupies the ground. This "*kala*," by the way, cost considerable trouble to the excavators. Occupying the site it did, it had to come down if the most important portion of the work was not to go undone; but it was a terrible business to secure that result. The wretched place figured in formal reports as a complete modern fortress of the highest strategical importance; and permission to dismantle it was only given at last on condition of rebuilding it afterwards, exactly as it was before. As this cost something under £100, an inference may be drawn as to the character of the "fort."

The temple is of the ordinary "Semitic" type, and so follows the same general plan as Solomon's at Jerusalem, and the larger one at Baalbek. That is to say, there was an inner shrine, or *cella*, into which normally none could enter, and a *naos* before it corresponding to the "holy place" at Jerusalem. Outside the temple was a series of "concentric" courts, of irregular shape, and probably varying degrees of sanctity, each one lower in level than the one within it. One of these contained the great altar for sacrifice, and the tank for ablutions. The altar was approached (again as at Jerusalem) by a sloping ramp and not by steps. "Thou shalt not go up by steps unto Mine altar"—a device probably meant to facilitate the leading up of the sacrificial beasts. The whole is of mud brick; stone, or even burnt brick being only used for ornament; and the tank mentioned was made watertight by a thick lining of asphalt, still *in situ*. If the temple has not yielded any such sculptures as have been found in the palaces of Nineveh and Khorsabad, many minor *antikas* have come to light there; and perhaps the most interesting was a fine model of a flash of lightning, in gold, and about a metre in length. This was no doubt the *ex voto* offering of some great man in old days, but no inscription was found to explain it. Its discovery caused great excitement in Turkish official circles, report having necessarily been sent by the Ottoman

commissioner who is supposed to superintend the excavation. Stories circulated of the finding of a{346} "great treasure of gold"; which was, of course, exactly what most people believed the Franks to have been digging for all along. Accordingly two regiments were dispatched to the place, one from Mosul and one from Baghdad, to receive the treasure and escort it duly to some Government headquarters. Naturally, no difficulty was made about the surrender; for the Germans were under pledge to put all articles that they found in the Museum at Constantinople, and had not the least intention of breaking their word. One wonders, however, by how much the cost of moving say, 1200 men for ten days' march, exceeded the intrinsic value of a thin strip of gold, about thirty-eight inches long!

The temple of Assur and the king's palace there form, as is usual, a sort of royal quarter of the city, and stand together at one edge of the great mound. They look out over the plain to the "summer temple," whither the images of the gods were solemnly conveyed every year, when the heat became too much for their comfort in their regular residence. This was a great portico or enclosed garden rather than a temple, and was apparently stone built, which is a rarity in this land.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the excavations, after the great temple itself, is what the excavators call "the Oriental Pompeii." This is the old town, of date similar to the palace; and therefore going back to about 1000 B.C., though it was inhabited long after the fall of the Assyrian Empire. It is interesting to see how, in every detail of the planning of the houses, the arrangements common in Mosul to-day reproduce this early period. Perhaps the streets in the older city are rather better paved and drained than in the modern one, but that is almost the only difference. We will allow, however, that some progress has been made in such a matter as the disposal of the bodies of the dead. Good folk in Mosul are more than a little casual

about this as it is; but they do have graveyards. Their ancestors in Assur put the dead under the floors of the living rooms, and often with scarce six inches between the top of the great pot that served as coffin and the level of the room. They may, as suggested, have sealed up that particular room of {347}the house; yet even so——!

Bidding farewell to our hospitable hosts we drifted on down stream, shooting in the process a few very mild rapids. The behaviour of a *keleg* in such places is perhaps a little startling to a nervous person; though as a matter of fact its safety lies in its eccentricity. Being composed of nothing but a multitude of separate skins, tied onto a very flexible frame, it twists and wriggles and "hogs and sags" in a manner most bewildering to the stranger on it, though it always comes out well into smooth water at the end. It is however, somewhat startling to be awakened at night by what seems a most unusually complicated earthquake.

Other *kelegs* appear as we descend. Even in the present thinly populated state of the country, they are fairly numerous, and must have been far more so when the "Ten Thousand" marched up the eastern bank of this river. Indeed, they must have been so familiar, that it is a matter for surprise that the Greeks feared to make use of them, when it was a question of how to cross the Tigris with their baggage; particularly as they had at least one man in the army who was bred to their use. Still, they shrank from the unfamiliar, and preferred to abandon all their plunder and take to the hazardous passage of the mountains.

Tekrit, another city of vast antiquity, was reached and passed. This was a place of some importance in the ecclesiastical history of the land, as having been a stronghold of the Jacobites against the dominant Nestorian Church. It also marks a change in the geography, indicated by a change of *kelegji*. By law of that ancient brotherhood, the river falls into three stretches, and each man must stick to his own portion—Diarbekr to Mosul, Mosul to Tekrit,

or Tekrit to Baghdad. This custom does somehow correspond to some subtle alteration in conditions, though we cannot trace how or why. But the fact remains that below that point the cattle develop humps, which they do not affect elsewhere; and that the traffic on the river is conducted not only in *kelegs*, but also in *ghufas*, which are not to be seen higher up.

A *ghufa* is, if anything, more ancient than a *keleg*, for its type dates back to the flood, if not to the times before it; {348} and the Babylonian "deluge tablets" seem to picture Shamashnapastim (the equivalent of Noah), as navigating a gigantic *ghufa* of 140 cubits diameter. The craft is nothing but a wicker-work coracle of palm basket-work, circular in shape, but "pitched within and without with pitch" instead of being provided with a hide covering. In size it may be anything from the dimensions of a clothes' basket up to twenty or twenty-five feet in diameter, according to the size of the palm-spathes that form its ribs. It can hardly be capsized, and can carry enormous weights; but it is difficult to steer without practice, a novice tending to go round and round in a circle of small diameter.[152]

Ghufas are hardly seen above Samarra, which is some fourteen hours below Tekrit, for the source of the bitumen with which they are pitched is near to the lower city. Samarra is itself historic enough, though it only appears in Western history as the scene of the action in which Julian fell. As a shrine and *ziaret* of the *Shiah* Mussulmans, however, it is second in sanctity only to Kerbela itself; for it is the burial-place, not indeed of the two grandsons of the Prophet, but of many of their comrades who fell beside them on the day of the "battle of the ditch"; and a magnificent mosque covers their bones.

To an antiquarian, however, there is something at Samarra of far greater interest than anything of either Roman or Mussulman history; for there stands the only *ziggurat* or Babylonian temple tower that has not been

ruined in the lapse of centuries. By some fortunate freak of fate, the great pyramid, with its spiral ascent to the summit, was preserved when worship ceased in the temple below. It went on as Zoroastrian fire-temple; and subsequently as minaret to{349} the great mosque which Harun-l-Rashid built at its foot. That has gone now, and only a square of ruinous wall remains; but we owe some gratitude to the Abbassid, who was great enough to revere the monument of an older day.

So the monument has been preserved to our own time, and stands still with its brick casing practically intact. It must be beyond comparison the oldest tower in the world, for Samarra was one of the earliest of Babylonian shrines.

This site is, we believe, the one which the German excavators have decided to examine next, as soon as their work at Kala Shergat, which is now rapidly approaching completion, shall be finally done; and we understand that a preliminary survey, and perhaps a little experimental digging, has given them the right to hope for a harvest of most exceptional richness. One must trust that the proximity of the mosque will not hinder their work.

Slowly the last stage of the journey is accomplished, for the river current becomes gentler as it approaches the great delta of the two rivers. Hereabouts the capital of the country has stood since time began, though it has changed its place and name again and again. Date groves appear on the shore in place of melon gardens; and flocks of big pelicans (called "water-sheep" locally) gather on the sand-banks, accompanied by the only type of kingfisher which is quakerishly serious in his garb. Both above and below, his cousins flaunt magnificent metallic hues; but in the reaches above Baghdad he keeps to a simple black and white livery. Finally, "Baghdad's walls of fretted gold" are seen in the distance, and the *keleg* has to be exchanged for a *ghufa*, for facility of shooting the bridge of boats.

Baghdad is civilization once more; a town that boasts

hotels and European shops and costumes, besides being a railway terminus at present, to which trains may possibly attain in the future. Also it is a steamer port, being the highest point on the river to which the boats of Messrs. Lynch, which connect this place with Bassora and the open sea, are permitted to ascend.

We may see trains at Baghdad in a few years, but the engineers who are constructing the railway keep it {350} enveloped in mystery now, and allow no man to approach without an order from the Governor-General of the town. One assumes there is good reason for this, though it is not obvious what harm anyone could do by looking at the steel sleepers.

Baghdad is considered thoroughly Oriental, and may appear so to the traveller who makes his entrance to Mesopotamia this way; but to one coming from the interior it has a flavour of new Turkey, semi-reformed, and unimproved. The big street that runs right through the town, to stop short at the garden wall of the British Consulate, is by way of being a parable of young Turkey, that started out with magnificent projects but without weighing the difficulties in the way, or its own powers of overcoming them. In this particular case, the *Vali* of the town, anxious to set about his improvements, proposed to drive a road through the gardens of the British Residency, without with your leave or by your leave; regardless of the fact that the street, if desired, could be taken with equal ease by another route, where he would have found the British authorities ready to co-operate and assist. When the Consul protested, the road-makers were told to go on and carry out their orders; and only the ominous presence of a sepoy sentry on the top of the wall they proposed to demolish made them hold their hands. It was a reproduction in little of the British sentry who promenaded the *Pont de Jena* at Paris when Blucher proposed to blow up that offensively named structure. To pull down a wall

was nothing, but to knock down the sentry was a more formidable thing.

It is melancholy, however, and suggests the presence of a malevolent demon, when you see high-minded men set on carrying out lofty aims in such a way that they must fail, and that their own best friends are unable either to save or to help them. That has been the bane of Turkey since her revolution, coupled with an invincible ignorance of the truth that phrases will not clean pigsties.

Baghdad is the necessary starting-point for a pilgrimage to Babylon; and there are facilities for the expedition, in that the place lies only just to one side of the road to Kerbela,{351} whither go *Shiah* pilgrims every day in scores. Hence carriages are easily to be got, with relays of beasts on the way, and a start in the late afternoon will bring the traveller to Babylon in time for breakfast next day.

These conveyances are rude wagonettes, provided with springs in plenty, and drawn by four mules or horses harnessed abreast. The seats provided are merely hard wooden slats, narrow and uncomfortable, and the European is not advised to make use of them. A long cord passed from side to side across the carriage, so as to make a sort of hammock on which a camp mattress may be placed, is far preferable, and enables one to lie at ease all the night through. Whether one will get much sleep is questionable. The road is a mere unmetalled track, and the horses go at a brisk hand-gallop, taking all irregularities as they come; so that the carriage is apt to play "cup and ball" with its contents all the way. However, a halt from 10 P.M. to 2 A.M. affords a welcome respite.

Still if the European cannot sleep, the native is of a superior type. Our assistant driver passed most of the journey rolled up in a ball under the feet of his superior on the box. There, though apparently in momentary danger of tumbling off under the wheels, he snored without

interruption, under conditions that might have kept the Fat Boy wakeful and alert, never stirring save at the halts, and perhaps not being really roused even then. It is certain that he got off, took the collars from one set of animals and put them on to the next; but the act seemed absolutely mechanical and somnambulistic, and when it was accomplished he rolled into his place again and snored once more.

With the dawn we were making our way through a gap in that great wall that so struck the imagination of Herodotus, and which still runs like an abandoned railway embankment across the level plain. One must question, however, whether the great structure was really (as the "Father of History" tells us) built of burnt brick throughout, "laid in bitumen, and bonded with reeds at every thirty courses." Faced with that material it probably was; but it certainly{352} has the appearance of being built, like most of the houses of the town, of unbaked mud.

Germans as hospitable as their compatriots at Assur received us at Babylon, and showed what they, working on the same thorough plan as their comrades, have uncovered of the greatest city of the ancient world.

Three great mounds, or sets of mounds, cover the ruins of Babylon, viz. Babil, Kasr (the palace mound), and Amran. It is the centre one of these that is now being excavated; though what has been uncovered is little but the foundations and basements of buildings, or in many cases nothing but the "matrices" from which every single burnt brick has been removed. The city has been used as a brick-quarry for centuries, Baghdad and various other towns being built almost entirely from this material; and it is a rather melancholy reflection that, when the Germans have finished their work, it is most probable that every brick they have uncovered will follow the others in the course of a few years. No matter how deep they bury them, they will be dug up, for good burnt building material commands its

price in a city like Baghdad. One must get what consolation one can from the fact that at least good and accurate plans of the whole will be available.

All the buildings of the central mound are uncovered now, presenting to the casual visitor the appearance of a mere bewildering maze of brickwork, in which it is very easy to get lost, though all is clear enough to the expert eyes of the guide. Practically all that has been found is of the date of Nebuchadnezzar; for only one building above ground is the work of his father, Nabopolassar, and the most systematic borings have found nothing below.

At first sight it is strange that a city which was ancient in the days of Abraham should have no monuments older than those of a man who came very late in her history, and was in fact a sort of Louis XIV of Chaldaea; but there is an historical explanation of the fact. Babylon was utterly destroyed by Sennacherib of Assyria at about the time Rome was in building, it being the intention of that ruler that no man should dwell there more. This was his punishment{353} for the series of rebellions against his authority, stirred up by that Merodach Baladan of Chaldaea, whose ambassadors make one transitory appearance in the Book of Kings. The awe which the whole world felt at this destruction of the most ancient and venerable of cities is reflected in the words of Isaiah: “Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods He hath broken unto the ground.”



CHAL.

The home of the chartered brigand mentioned on p. 317. A deep gorge is interposed immediately beyond the village; and beyond the further hills lie the valleys of Lower Tkhuma and Salabekan.

Of course the king could not attain his end. Men simply would not abandon the "Gate of the Gods," the Mother of civilization and culture for four thousand years; and Esarhaddon, the successor of Sennacherib, had to give permission for the rebuilding. Still, nothing very magnificent was attempted, and thus, when Chaldaea rose to empire under Nebuchadnezzar, there was nothing ancient and venerable in her capital. The King had a *tabula rasa* for his great building schemes.

And what schemes these were! Really one cannot refuse sympathy to the words of pride recorded by the Prophet, when one sees even the ruins in their present state. "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built?" Scarce a brick is found that does not bear his name. Rome's *Via Sacra* at its grandest can hardly have rivalled Babylon's Processional Way—a road eighty feet wide from kerb to kerb, exclusive of the twenty foot pathways on either side; and this paved throughout with slabs of alabaster, a yard square and half a yard in thickness, bedded on layer after layer of brick laid in bitumen. And the setting of the road was in keeping. It was lined from end to end with sculptured bulls and griffins, and the great gate of Ishtar spans it midway in its

length. It runs from the grand temple of Merodach in the south, out to the mount of Babil in the north; forming, as it were, the spinal cord of the whole city, and passing just under the walls of the royal Palace.

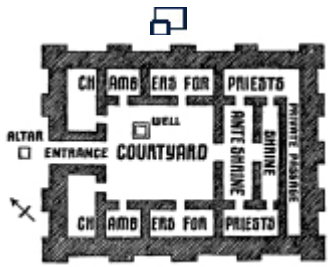
Here the bulk of what has been uncovered consists of suite after suite of small rooms, usually in sets of four or six, and probably forming the apartments of the multitudinous Court officials. Also, there are long ranges of vaulted cellars and store-rooms; where in some cases the{354} arches of the roof and door-way have survived for a testimony that the Chaldaeans were well acquainted with the principle of the vault. The great feature of the Palace, however, is the Hall of Audience—the scene, in all probability, of Belshazzar's feast—which happens to be the only part where the walls stand up above the original ground level. This is a grand hall indeed, measuring 200 feet by 80, and therefore as large as the nave of many a cathedral; and one can still trace opposite the doorway the apse that was the site of the throne. It is surprising to find that Chaldaean builders dared throw a vault across such a space as this; yet the total absence of the bases of any internal columns (such as would be needed to support a timber roof), unites with the extraordinary thickness of the side wall to convince the German excavators that such was actually the case. A "wagon vault" of such a span would be no mean feat even now; though the Sassanid builders did not fear it, as may be seen in the still existing "Arch of Chosroës" on the site of ancient Ctesiphon. This great vault, shown in our illustration, may still be seen standing near Baghdad, and was in all probability a replica of Nebuchadnezzar's hall.

To the north of the Palace was the deep dry moat which bounded both the city and the royal quarter; and which the Processional Way crossed, most probably by a bridge, though of this no evidence remains. The German excavators consider that this moat, or at all events some

part of it, was the “den of lions” of the King of Babylon. There is evidence in parallel instances that such was the case elsewhere.

Of course the great temples of Bel-Merodach, Ishtar, and other gods, form a feature of the city, and have been most carefully excavated. They were constructed on a plan that seems strange to the Western; for they have no precinct, or have lost what they had, and the houses of the poorest quarter of the town actually abutted on the walls of the holiest of them.

Herodotus speaks of “courts two stadia square,” but one cannot reconcile this with the facts. In design they{355} seem to have followed the local type of house; for they consist of a series of comparatively small chambers, built round a small court. The shrine (which has usually an “ante-shrine” before it) is no more than an inner chamber at one end of this court; and has usually a secret passage behind it, communicating with the chambers where the priests lodged, and which it is difficult to believe was not intended for the production of “miraculous” oracles. Strangest of all perhaps is it to find that, while fine material like burnt brick, enamel, alabaster and hewn stone, is lavished on the palaces and secular buildings of the city, the temples of the gods are without exception built of plain sun-dried mud brick.



TEMPLE OF ISHTAR BABYLON

This extends even to the altars, which stand on a small

pavement just without the main doorways, and practically in the street. There is no stone anywhere in any of the buildings, save the blocks on which the great doors revolved, which were buried out of sight.[153]

{356}

There must have been a reason for this choice, and economy can be ruled out of court without hesitation. Perhaps it is most probable that religious conservatism was the real motive. Men had built their temples, like their houses, of unburnt brick for centuries before they learned the art of burning it; and when that art had been acquired, the old material was still regarded as the proper one for the sacred purpose, and preserved accordingly. In like fashion the Jewish altar was for centuries composed of unhewn blocks of stone in a brazen frame, because the original altars of their patriarchs were unhewn of necessity. As a matter of fact, the very rudeness of the material of these temples has saved them from destruction when other buildings have perished. It was worth nobody's while to transport unbaked brick anywhere, and in consequence, now that the dêbris has been removed, the temple walls stand up to a far greater height than do those of the palace. One fears, however, that this cannot continue, for of course mud needs to be sheltered from rain-drip if it is to last; though if that condition be secured it is one of the most durable forms of building.

These temples can hardly have been beautiful monuments. Impressive they doubtless were, for size and proportion together can hardly fail in securing that; but impressive in the fashion of an older world. Built just when Greece was feeling her way to the matchless grace of the Parthenon, they stood like the elephant among beasts—the memorial of an earlier age of evolution, but a sight of awe and wonder to the younger races of men.

It is interesting, too, to find that even that younger civilization has its monument here among the tombs of the

old. Babylon fell before the Persian, and her glory passed away. But when the Persian fell before the Greek Alexander, that last of the great kings of the East showed himself the first of modern rulers also, in that he had dreams of uniting ancient East and modern West in one great empire. It was a dream that passed with the dreamer; though it has been revived time and again since, and noble men will spend and be spent for it even now. Alexander had ideas of{357} transplanting the finest flower of Greek culture to his new capital in the East—for such he intended Babylon to be. The dramas of Æschylus and Sophocles should be performed in ancient and restored Babylon; and with that object he ordered the construction of a Greek theatre of the best pattern of his day, in the mud brick of Babil. Strange parable of his great dreams, and strange exotic too, it stands to this day in the suburbs of Babylon; a memorial to all time of that first effort of the West to educate and assimilate the East—that East which it found so easy to overrun and so impossible to understand.

So "Babylon, the glory of nations, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency," stands now uncovered for an hour, though a short time will see her hidden once more, and perhaps finally removed to form the material for modern houses.

Meantime, what of the land itself, which was the garden of the earth once, and is little but a mixture of swamp and desert now? The waters that men taught to make the land fruitful have been only its destruction when they were left uncontrolled. Will the great scheme that an English engineer has put forward make the land a garden once more? It can, of course—on the condition that it is properly managed. For nothing can take away the marvellous fertility of the soil; and there will be water for irrigation as long as the snow falls on Hakkiari and Ararat to feed the Tigris and the Euphrates.

If the work is managed, when finished, by the men who

designed and executed it, it will do as much for the delta of Mesopotamia as the "Barrage" of the Nile has done for its delta, or the dam of Assouan for upper Egypt. But the Barrage, when built, stood absolutely useless for decades, because those who ruled the country would not trust the builders to administer their own work, fearing the power that such a position would give them in the land that they were saving. Will those men of the same stock who rule in Mesopotamia submit to govern by foreign advice, and so save the country? Or will they say (as they have always thought hitherto), "We cannot save our rule by compliance. {358} Let the land go to ruin, and the people too. At least it is ours, and we will rule it to the end."

One who knew the Ottoman better than most has said, "If you want to know what a Turk will do under any circumstances, think first what you would do yourself; then what he ought to do; then what it is his obvious interest to do. After that, you can rule out all those alternatives with complete confidence; and that will at least narrow down the field of possible choice."

Still, we must hope for the best. May it be an omen that the date-palm (Babylon's ancient and beautiful emblem of fertility and life) is now springing up anew in every trench of the excavations at Babil—sown there by the stones of the dates served out as rations to the native staff of labourers.{359}

CHAPTER XVII

OUR SMALLEST ALLY

NINE years have elapsed since the last chapter was written, and the hope with which it ends has been most tragically deferred. Nearer Asia has been swept by another of those great cataclysms with which its past history has rendered it

but too familiar—in this case a back-wash only of a yet more worldwide catastrophe, but scarcely less devastating than the ravages of Genghis or Timour. Of those mentioned by name in our earlier chapters a large proportion have perished. Nay, whole communities and nations have been almost completely erased. And some brief epilogue is needed to tell of the fate that has befallen them, and to arouse some new interest among Englishmen in the future of those battered remnants whom their Treaties still pledge them to protect.

The most prominent place in our previous narrative has been given to the Assyrian Christians, and especially to the Ashiret mountaineers of Hakkiari, who formed the most virile and independent section of that tiny nation and Church. And it is but fitting that we should again give them precedence in the "Footnote to the History of the Great War" which we are now contributing; since, in this obscure corner of the stage upon which that portentous drama was enacted, they played perhaps the most prominent and assuredly the worthiest part.

The first news of the outbreak of war was brought to Mar Shimun at Qudshanis. He had just returned thither from Van, where he had been discussing Governmental business with the Vali. The discussions had been most amicable; and he had brought back with him a whole crop of promises for the redress of grievances—promises which he had{360} accepted with becoming gratitude, but at the recognised rate of discount, having had ripe experience of the value at which they were apt to be redeemed. And he was far from feeling reassured by the startling tidings that now reached him; for all knew the sort of justice that the Ottoman reserved for his helots whenever the eyes of Europe might chance to be diverted elsewhere.

He soon saw an earnest of his misgivings in the sacking of isolated Armenian villages, and in renewed outbreaks of the feuds which were perpetually simmering on the Persian

border between the Begzade Kurds and the Assyrians of Mergawar and Tergawar. A general massacre of all Christians began to be openly talked about; and when (in November) the expected happened, and Turkey entered the lists as a combatant, that event was signalised by the pillaging of all the Christian villages near Bashkala with the practically open approval of the local Ottoman authority.

The first open fighting, however, occurred in neutral Persia—a country which should (theoretically) have been out of bounds to both sides. But Urmi, though nominally Persian, had for years been practically administered by the resident Russian "consul," and the Turks were not altogether unjustified in electing to regard it as enemy territory. A mixed force of Turks and Kurds swept down from the mountains upon Urmi, massacring the wretched Armenians, and driving before them the struggling Assyrians from the villages of Mergawar and Tergawar. They felt so confident of victory that, when within a mile or two of the city, they flung away the reserves of bread that they had brought with them, relying on the promise of their leaders that next day they would be sacking the bazaars. And, verily, it looked as if they would be; for Urmi is only defended by a ruinous mud wall, and its sole effective garrison (apart from the Assyrian auxiliaries) was the Russian consular guard. But it was now discovered that the consul had also in reserve a considerable stock of arms and ammunition, and with these the clansmen were rearmed. An opportune Russian reinforcement arrived in the nick of time from Tabriz, and the great assault on the morrow was decisively and bloodily{361} repulsed. The invaders recoiled to the mountains, where their ill-disciplined Kurdish levies dispersed; and soon another defeat of a second Kurdish force near Suj Bulak rendered the position at Urmi, at all events, temporarily secure.

But the Russian commanders were uneasy. Enver

Pasha's invasion of Transcaucasia was by now beginning to make headway, and the Russians were recalling their detachments in Azerbaijan to meet the threat to Batum. They told the American missionaries that the utmost they could promise them was not to withdraw without full notice; and even this guarded promise proved illusory, for the very next morning brought them imperative orders from headquarters directing immediate evacuation. The whole Russian force marched off instantly—and in their train some 10,000 of the Christian population of Urmi, taking with them such scanty provision as they were able at the moment to collect. They saved their bare lives by their flight, and eventually the greater part of them found a miserable asylum at Tiflis; but the hardships of their journey, and of their prolonged exile, exacted a terrible toll.

The fate of those who remained proved that the fugitives' forebodings had been well grounded. Urmi was abandoned once more to the wretched misrule of the Persians; and the man who obtained chief authority was that same Mejid es Sultaneh of whom we have already spoken on page 215. In those days he had been generally regarded as one of the most enlightened and free-thinking of the Persian nobility. His reforming tendencies had earned him disgrace and exile; and it had been to the generosity of sympathetic English merchants that he had owed the preservation of his forfeited estates. But apparently the only lesson that he had been capable of learning from adversity was the wisdom of truckling to iniquity, and he now reappeared as a pan-Islamic fanatic of the most virulent and reactionary type.

The Persian magnates were as much averse to Turkish domination as to Russian, and might have been expected to evince some gratitude to their Christian neighbours for the prominent share they had taken in repelling the recent{362} assault. But apparently they argued in their own minds that

the very presence of the Christians had in some sort invited the invasion; that anyway they had helped the hated Russians, and that a general persecution of them would be the best way of conciliating the Turks.

So some hundreds of these poor wretches were massacred during the winter—driven out in batches of 50 or 60 to one or other of the neighbouring villages, and there mercilessly put to death. Among them were a batch of 70 from the Christian villages of Gawar, who had been impressed to act as porters by the Turks in the recent invasion and had given their captors the slip when the invading army took to flight. These were marched back towards Gawar and handed over to the Kurds—possibly the very men who had impressed them—by whom they were all knifed or clubbed to death.

In these massacres perished Mar Dinkha,[154] the Bishop of Mergawar; and we, who have laughed at his oddities must not omit to pay our tribute to the heroism of the old man's martyrdom. Utterly crippled by his injuries, he spent his last hours in prison crawling to and fro to comfort his fellow-sufferers—his last moments in bestowing absolution upon them as each in turn preceded him to death.

It should be noted by our phil-Islamites that, in nearly every instance, all these victims were offered their lives on the sole condition of apostasy. With Islam (when free to express itself) it is still "the Koran or the sword."

Mercifully the return of spring brought a respite from this reign of terror. Enver's invasion of Transcaucasia had been utterly crushed at Sara Hamish. The Russian outposts spread south again, and Urmi was reoccupied once more.

With the Assyrian tribesmen in the mountains the crisis had not developed so rapidly. The Turks themselves were anxious to defer it. Indeed, there is no valid reason to doubt that they would have liked to evade it altogether.

This knot of hardy mountaineers ensconced in their rocky fastnesses were far more difficult to eradicate than ten times their number of Armenians—poor, spiritless hucksters{363} and husbandmen dispersed in open villages and towns. There was little spoil to be won from them—many more hard knocks than ha'pence—and the force that would be needed to subdue them was wanted rather urgently elsewhere. Moreover, if they could only be cajoled into complacency they might prove quite a useful asset later as independent witnesses to character. The Armenian massacres were now really beginning, and the Turks were inflexibly resolved to persist in them to the uttermost. There could come no protests from Europe, but perhaps from America there might—and the presence of American missionaries in the country rendered it impossible for the facts to be altogether hid. It would be but prudent accordingly to prepare a line of apology, and to invest with some faint plausibility the plea that this monstrous holocaust had been "exaggerated," and that such "repressive measures" as had been adopted were really no more than were necessary to quell an incipient revolt. Such a plea might gain valuable corroboration from the fact that another Christian *millet*, living in the same provinces and under the same conditions as the Armenians, had nevertheless continued loyal to their suzerains, and had seen in the Turks' proceedings no cause of apprehension for themselves. On military grounds also the mountaineers were worth conciliating; for, if Turkish Armenia were invaded, this little garrison on their flank might sensibly hamper the defenders.

Thus, quite high bids were made for what the Turks called Assyrian loyalty, and what the Assyrians (clinging fondly to their traditional but shadowy independence) preferred to style alliance. Their Patriarch, their bishops, and their chiefs were all to be salaried. They were to be armed. They were to be allowed absolute freedom for

education. And many of the Assyrian leaders felt certainly much tempted to clinch the bargain, and to adopt what (on the face of things) seemed manifestly the safer course.

But the very magnitude of these Greek gifts aroused the distrust of the majority. They knew well that Turkish{364} promises were apt to prove so much "hot air." The arms and salaries were things that could never be expected to materialise. They doubted even the immunity which all these lavish promises implied. *Jehad* had been proclaimed, and they were Christians in a Moslem country. Could the Turks guarantee them from the attacks of their turbulent Kurdish neighbours—attacks from which they had never been wholly exempt even in their most tranquil periods, and to which the proclamation of *Jehad* would now give sanction and cohesion? Could they even rest assured that the Turks themselves would not attack them as soon as their hands were freed from the embarrassments which now beset them? They saw the fate that had overtaken their co-religionists, the Armenians and Jacobites; the fate that had befallen their own fellow-tribesmen in the outlying districts to the East. Every night brought their Patriarch news (for now none dared travel by day) of some fresh massacre perpetrated in some of their isolated villages. One night came five successive messengers from five different villages; and all closed their tidings with the same refrain, "I only am escaped to tell." Would it not be better to trust to their own right arms? To the chance of help from Russia, to the fainter chance of help from England? These nations had always befriended them, and with them their real sympathies lay.

Yet the peril was great and obvious. They were in the very jaws of the wolf, and who could blame them if they elected to play for safety? They could rest assured at all events that England and Russia would not. They might argue, with their Yezidi neighbours (and with a good many other more enlightened folk in less remote districts than

Sheikh Adi) that it was safer to offend a good God, who might forgive, than a malignant Devil who assuredly would not.

Meanwhile the war was still distant, and no final choice was forced on them. Through the winter the nation wavered. But it was significant that the Patriarch quitted Qudshanis (which lay on the outskirts of his territory, and close to the Turkish garrison at Julamerk), and withdrew{365} across the Zab into the rugged mountain fastnesses of Diz. This seemed to portend rejection of the Turkish overtures, yet in truth under what other conditions could he continue to negotiate with a Government which had just inaugurated the Armenian massacres by treacherously kidnapping and assassinating their chiefs?

Then, in the spring of 1915, the war took a turn in Russia's favour. The Turkish invasion of Transcaucasia was defeated, and the Russian invasion of Turkish Armenia began. A Russian army reached Van and relieved the Armenians beleaguered there; and a detachment thrust forward to Bashkala sent a formal invitation to the Assyrians to throw in their lot with the Allies. The invitation was boldly accepted; and the point that seems definitely to have turned the scale in favour of acceptance was the religious character that had been given to the war by the Turkish proclamation of *Jehad*. The Assyrians felt that they were now called to play their part on the side of Humanity and Christendom; and as soon as the call came definitely they braved all the risks that it involved.

But no doubt it is too much to assert that they were guided entirely by this higher motive. They were (as our previous chapters have indicated) a nation of fighters with a healthy, carnal appetite for what is vulgarly called "a jolly row." And they were probably swayed in the same direction by the fact that all their neighbours with whom they had long-standing and (in the main) very just causes of quarrel, were ranged on the contrary side. The war-song

of *Shamasha* Ephraim was soon in all men's mouths in the mountain villages, and some of its spirited lines deserve quoting as evincing the ardour with which they entered the war:

Brothers, up and arm you; 'tis the Turk assails you;
Lo, the day is dawning when we march to meet the foe!
Quit your flocks and cornfields, grip your trusty rifles,
Forth we go to battle in the name of Mar Shimun.

Stand by one another, clansmen of the nation,
Tkhuma by Tyari, and let Baz by Jilu stand.
Like a band of brothers, hearts and hands united,
Forth we go to battle in the name of Mar Shimun.{366}

David is our leader, valiant in the combat,
He is captain over us to lead us forth to war.
Danger shall not daunt us, fear shall flee before us,
Forth we go to battle in the name of Mar Shimun.

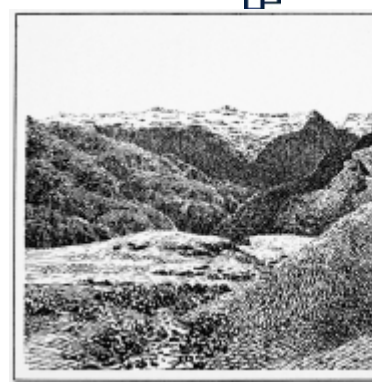
Young men of the nation, tribes renowned in story,
Mighty men in battle were our fathers' kings of old.
Raging through the valleys, storming o'er the mountains,
Forth we go to battle in the name of Mar Shimun.

Nineveh the holy[155] beckons back her children;
Know ye not her ancient walls shall be the victor's crown?
There alone, Assyrians, shall our race be stablished,
Forth we go to battle in the name of Mar Shimun.

Their valour was soon to be tested for scarcely had they committed themselves, when the Russians withdrew again northward and left them to fight it out alone. A formidable accumulation of enemies was promptly mustered against them, and within five weeks of their decision the Assyrians were battling for their lives. Mira Reshid[156] the tyrant of Berwar, led the confederated Kurds from the westward against Lizan and Lower Tyari and with him marched a strong contingent of regular troops from Mosul with batteries of mountain guns. Chumba and Upper Tyari were

attacked by the Artosh Kurds and the regular troops from Julamerk. The Agha of Chal[157] brought his forces against Salabekan and Tkhuma; and Sutu Agha of Oramar assailed Jilu and Baz. The Christians were outnumbered on all sides and were much worse equipped than their enemies; for except for a small supply of rifles and ammunition which they had obtained from the Russians their arms were all sadly obsolete.

And yet the general result of this great combined attack was failure. Qudshanis was pillaged and burned and the Valley of Lizan was occupied. So also were the villages in the Sapna and Berwar valleys; but these were all open and isolated, and had never been regarded as tenable. The attacks on Jilu, Chumba and Salabekan were all three heavily repulsed. Thus, after a week's hard fighting the{367} {368} Assyrians had lost only the outskirts of their territory on the right (or western) bank of the Zab, and had kept all their key fastnesses (on the eastern side of it) intact. It was only the first round certainly, but the Turks had been foiled for a season; and it was hoped that the Russian operations in Armenia might eventually bring them relief.



THE MOUNTAINS OF DIZ AND TAL, FROM THE
Looking across the Zab Gorge, which at this point is

Then followed a deed as brutal and dastardly as it was

characteristically Turkish. Hormizd, Mar Shimun's eldest brother, a young man of three-and-twenty, had been at Constantinople for his education—at the Turkish Government's own invitation—for a period of over two years. As soon as Turkey entered the war, he had been arrested and placed in confinement, and obviously could have had no personal responsibility for any of the events that had occurred subsequently. He was now sent under guard to Mosul to be used for the foulest of blackmail.

The Vali of that city was no longer worthy old Tahir. [158] With the good luck that had generally attended him, and which he had generally merited, he had been gathered to his fathers little more than a twelve-month before. His successor, Haidar Beg, was a ruffian—a fit tool for higher placed ruffians—and this man now sent Mar Shimun the message: "Your brother is in my hands, and unless you surrender he dies."

The brothers were almost of an age. They had been bound together from infancy by ties of the closest affection. It is vain to hope that any words of ours can succeed in conveying to our readers the poignancy of the trial to which Mar Shimun now found himself subjected. But his choice was the choice of Guzman the Good. "My people are in my charge, and they are many," he answered; "how can I betray them for the sake of one, though that one be my brother?" And, on the receipt of this answer, Hormizd was put to death.





ENTRANCE TO AMADIA.

No. 16

Mar Shimun had made two attempts to obtain further succour from the Russians during the five or six weeks' respite which succeeded the first attacks. And on the second occasion some reinforcement appears to have been{369} sent, but it is not quite known at what period, while it is certain that it never arrived. For some years previous to the war common rumour had persistently credited the Russians with having secretly sapped the allegiance of many prominent chiefs among the Kurds; and as soon as war broke out it had been confidently expected that these men would turn against Turkey. How far this rumour was justified is perhaps known positively to no one; but it is certain that, while hopes of plunder and butchery lasted, the Kurds all sided with the Turks. Perhaps the Russians may have had some cause to think that the more prosperous aspect of their affairs in Asia Minor might now be prompting these double traitors to think better of their first bargain. Anyway a party of some 400 Cossacks was about this time pushed up from Urmi

into Oramar. Sutu Agha received them most graciously, and sent two of his own sons with them to guide them on their further journey. But secretly he betrayed them into an ambush which he had prepared with the assistance of the Kurds of Shemsdinan, and in the deep Balanda gorge they were exterminated to the last man.

The second assault on the Assyrians was delivered in the middle of August; and this time the assailants had the formidable assistance of the Kurds of Barzan, who lay to the south of Tkhuma, and formed the connecting link between the co-ordinated assaults from Oramar on the east and from Berwar on the west. Our friend Sheikh Abdul Selim[159] was unhappily no longer their leader. The Government had always looked with a jealous eye on the tolerant "Sheikh of the Christians," and a few months earlier he had been enticed down to Mosul by the Vali Haidar Beg, and there secretly put to death.

It is doubtful perhaps whether, had he still been in power, he would have been able to resist the pressure put upon him by the *Hukumet* (and by his own tribesmen) to play his part in an official *Jehad*. After all he was a Moslem, and a Turkish vassal, and a consistent contemner of Russians, so wherefore should he stand aside? But he might have proved a chivalrous, albeit a formidable, enemy,{370} and his influence might have alleviated some of the vindictiveness of the campaign.

For this second assault was successful. It was from the southern side that the Christian valleys were most assailable; and Tkhuma, Baz, Jilu, and Tyari were ravaged from end to end. The churches and houses were burned, the fields wasted, the trees cut down, the irrigation channels demolished; and the valleys were thus rendered practically uninhabitable for years.

It was in this devastation that the famous church of Mar Zeia in Jilu[160] was plundered for the first time in its history—maugre that notable talisman that had always

preserved it previously, the Charter of Protection granted to it (as believed) by Mohammed himself. But its fate was not quite unavenged. A fierce young Kurdish chieftain, the eldest son of Simco Agha of the Shekak Kurds, was the leader of the spoilers; and he (like Fanatic Brooke) had boasted that he would not rest till he had seen the ruin of every Christian church in the land. As he now stood at the door, watching the destruction of that wonderful and weird collection of age-old votive offerings, a bullet fired at extreme range took him in the head, and he dropped dead on the desecrated threshold.

But though beaten out of their valleys, the Assyrians were not yet done with. They now took refuge on their *Yailas*—the upland pastures on the laps of the mountains, 10,000 feet above sea-level—whither they had always been accustomed to drive their flocks and herds in summer, and where a considerable part of the nation used generally to remain encamped as long as the cattle were there. It was summer still, and the cattle had been driven there as usual: the *Yailas* were, therefore, already well provisioned, and there is always water from the melting snows.

These strongholds are only approachable by a few precipitous pathways, and the Kurdish attempts to penetrate to them were everywhere easily repulsed. Raiding parties of Assyrians were even able to sally down from them into the valleys, and carry back small supplies of corn from the{371} hidden granaries in the villages. Lack of salt was the chief privation that the bulk of the people suffered during their sojourn here, but salt is wellnigh a necessity to an Oriental; and their Patriarch, who (as a *Rabban*) was prohibited by his vows from eating flesh meat, was obliged to live almost entirely upon milk and parched corn.

But if the *Yailas* were impregnable, there was yet one fatal defect in them. It is absolutely and utterly impossible for any creature to live there in winter. Autumn was

already beginning; and, at these lofty altitudes, the first snows may fall as early as October. The Assyrians were virtually "treed" (to use an expressive Americanism); and their enemies, as fully conscious of the defect in their position as they were, were content to form a leaguer round them, and wait till they should come down to be killed.

In this almost hopeless position, Mar Shimun determined on making one final appeal to the Russians. Accompanied by one of his principal chiefs (the *Malik* Khoshaba of Lizan) and by two other companions, he quitted the *Yaila* of Shina[161] at the head of the Tal and Tkhuma gorges to make his way across the mountains and down to Urmi Plain. The whole intervening country was thickly beset with enemies; but, travelling mostly by night and with experienced guides, the little party succeeded in accomplishing their daring journey, and reached the Russian outposts near Salmas.

But only to meet disappointment. The local Russian commanders professed themselves utterly unable to render the least assistance, and could only offer the Patriarch the abjectly despairing counsel that, now he himself had escaped, he had better remain in safety, and not sacrifice his life uselessly by a vain attempt to return. Mar Shimun indignantly refused to rest even one night in safety, and turned back at once to the mountains to share his people's doom.

The outlook was now truly terrible, but the Assyrians were determined not to perish without one more struggle. {372} They would attempt to break the leaguer and force their way down to Urmi Plain. Even for an uncumbered army this could hardly be thought a promising enterprise; and the tribesmen were but ill-armed and poorly disciplined. Moreover, they must endeavour to carry off with them their non-combatants—women and children. They would number in all about 25,000 persons, and flocks

and herds besides. Their route, as all know who have travelled there, lay through one of the most rugged and most difficult of the mountain districts in Asia; and the paths are seldom wide enough for two men to walk on them abreast. It was a desperate expedient, but to stay was certain death. Surrender meant massacre, for there was no mercy either in Turk or Kurd; and if the worst came to the worst, it was better to die fighting. Moreover, they had leaders who knew how to make the most even of the slenderest chances; and the plan which they resolved to attempt was marked by all the hardihood and ingenuity of desperation.

The bulk of their foes lay to the eastward, blocking all the direct tracks to Urmi, and drawing their sustenance from the fertile fields of Gawar, where Nuri Beg had just completed a peculiarly atrocious massacre of the unarmed Christians of the plain. Therefore they would break out westward, where no one would dream of expecting them. They would march in two bands, lest their line should be strung out unwieldily—and perhaps with a tacit prevision like that of the patriarch Jacob, that if one band was caught and overwhelmed the other might have chances of escape. They would cross the Zab by the flimsy wooden bridges near the mouths of the lateral valleys of Diz and Tal.[162] Then, making a wide circuit northward, they would reunite on the further side of Julamerk, whence one more long day's march would bring them to Albaq (near Bashkala) and the pass that led to Salmas Plain.

And, in the face of all military probability, this daring plan actually succeeded. If the Assyrians were but poorly disciplined, the Kurds who beleaguered them were no better.{373}



A BIT OF THE ROAD BETWEEN TAL A
These built-up sections, or "Stangi," are a feature of

{374}

The pursuers who should have pressed on their tracks, as soon as they found that the *Yailas* had been evacuated, stayed behind to quarrel over the division of such sheep as had been abandoned; and the isolated detachments that strove to check their progress were surprised by their sudden sally and easily brushed aside.

The Patriarch marched with the Tal column, and his march was marked by an incident as moving as it is picturesque. His route led him over a lofty mountain col near Julamerk,[163] whence for the last time he was able to look down upon the little green "alp" that marked the site of his own village of Qudshanis; and, as he paused to gaze, one natural sigh escaped him: "When shall I ever drink the waters of Qudshanis again?" The words were caught by as attentive ears as those of the three mighty men who followed the son of Jesse. Without a word to their chieftain a small party of devoted warriors broke away from the line of march, burst through the Kurdish picket that attempted to bar the path against them, and brought back to their

beloved Patriarch a pitcher of water from the Qudshanis spring.

The columns from Tal and Diz joined hands again at Kotranis, and the reunited nation reached Albaq according to plan. Here they had one last struggle; for a body of Kurds from Gawar had crossed the Zab by one of the higher bridges and cut into their path ahead of them. But the pass was carried triumphantly by a detachment under Khoshaba of Lizan; and the Assyrians, saved by their own exertions, poured at last into Salmas Plain.

It was not a beaten host that arrived—or, at all events, no more beaten than that untamable Serbian army which, just at this very same period, was being driven from its own country by the combined Austrians and Bulgars. They had held their own against great odds as long as resistance was possible; and, when forced to retreat under appalling difficulties, they had brought away with them not only their women and children, but a large proportion of their{375} flocks and herds as well. They had indeed suffered heavy losses in the fighting and many women and children had succumbed to the hardships of the retreat. But their spirit was still unbroken, as they were yet destined amply to prove.

Their irruption over the border of Persia introduced an additional complication into a medley of anomalies which was already quite complicated enough. Persia was nominally neutral, but too weak to enforce her neutrality; and both combatants were still professedly respecting a neutrality which their every act ignored.

Azerbaijan is an appanage of the *Vali Ahd* (the Persian heir-apparent). The Governor of Urmi is consequently his nominee, and the Governor's Advisory Council are the Moslem notables of the place. But the infamous régime which these gentry had established during the previous winter had been promptly suppressed by the Russians as soon as they returned in the spring. The Governor still held

his post—was he not still (nominally) Governor? But the only orders he was allowed to issue were those that were put into his mouth by the Russian "consul." And, if the Russian consul chose to take previous council with anyone, he consulted not the Moslem notables, but the despised local Christians, who possessed no *locus standi* in the eyes of the Government at all. How intolerable this position must have seemed to a city full of fanatical Moslems will be appreciated by those who know the overbearing arrogance with which fanatical Moslems are accustomed to treat any Christian helots who may be subject to them, and the amount of swagger which an Oriental menial is apt to assume to celebrate his emancipation. But, grin as they might in secret, they did not dare do so openly in the presence of Russian soldiery; and, indeed, though he may be a bully, the Persian is generally a coward.

And now to complete their afflictions came this horde of ruffians from the mountains—men whom they despised, not merely as Christians, but as savages yet of whose physical prowess they were all mortally afraid; men who had lost their all, and who (so at least Urmi credited) had{376} been accustomed from their cradles to regard robbery and bloodshed as their ordinary daily work. Here they were with arms in their hands and Urmi at their mercy.

Yet in truth (in the words of Dr. Macdowell of the American Hospital at Urmi) the newcomers "behaved much better than anyone could reasonably expect." They certainly plundered at first—not, indeed, in the district of Salmas where the Patriarch had settled himself, but in the neighbourhood of Urmi where there was no controlling hand. But it is certain also that the Persians who complained of them had themselves been asking for trouble rather importunately. Starving men with arms in their hands are apt to grow rather restive when they find

conspicuously hard bargains being driven at their expense; and, having just saved their bare lives by means of their trusty weapons, they are mighty suspicious of invitations to surrender those weapons in exchange for a little food. Moreover, they had uglier treatment to complain of. Ijlal el Mulk, the Persian Governor of Urmi, came suddenly upon a party of Assyrians as he turned the sharp, rocky point at the northern end of the lake which is known as "Snatch-beard Corner," and promptly loosed his guards upon them in sheer panic terror, under the crazy delusion that they were an ambuscade. But even events like these were presently smoothed over; and, as there were plenty of deserted villages in the districts of Urmi and Salmas, the Assyrians found little difficulty in gradually suiting themselves with new homes.

Meanwhile they were not quite oblivious of the fact that "there was still a war on." Now, for the first time, they began to get adequately armed with modern rifles and ammunition from the Russian arsenals. And perhaps it deserves to be recorded that they took extremely kindly to bombing. Bombs made such noble detonations when used liberally in echoing ravines. Surma, the Patriarch's sister (as the only non-combatant who carried sufficient authority), was installed in charge of the ammunition depot; and, after living for months in a house crammed to the doors with high explosives, was amused to overhear a couple of her reckless tribesmen lamenting her pitiable "nervousness," because{377} she had sternly prohibited their smoking when they came to fetch powder from the magazine.

They now grew distinctly assiduous in the payment of a series of return calls upon their lately exulting Kurdish enemies. Sutu Agha's stronghold at Oramar was captured and sacked; and this victory regained for them quite a lot of the plunder of Jilu. Chal fell to a well-planned raid under David, the Patriarch's brother; and the summer

camps of the nomad Heriki[164] yielded quite a rich booty of sheep. These forays were conducted in much more gentlemanly fashion than the harrying of the Christian valleys in the autumn of 1915. The son of the Agha of Chal for instance, was captured at the fall of that fastness, and was at once released on a verbal promise that he would arrange an exchange of prisoners—a promise which (to the Kurds' credit) was for once loyally redeemed. "Grass soon grows over blood that has been shed in fair fight"; and if these courtesies were more often reciprocated by the Moslems we might entertain some hope of eventual peace in Kurdistan.

These diversions had at least the effect of immobilising a good number of Kurdish levies, who might otherwise have caused annoyance on the flank of the Russian advance to Erzerum; and the Russians rewarded this service by a lavish distribution of decorations which were immensely appreciated and universally worn. Mar Shimun himself received a personal letter of congratulation from the Tsar, and was welcomed with high distinction at Tiflis by the Grand Duke Nicholas.

Thus matters continued prosperous till the autumn of 1917, when the outlook again became fearfully overclouded by omens of Russian collapse. The munitions of war had never before been so plentiful as they were at this period in eastern Asia Minor. The arsenals of England, France, and America had been pouring material into the country to equip the armies of Russia. But the men for whom it was intended had no longer spirit to use it; and an Allied Commission had been despatched in hot haste to the Caucasus to try{378} and rake together a few substitutes to replace their exhausted protagonist.

There was plenty of fighting spirit still to be found among the Assyrians and a certain dour gloomy inveteracy among some Armenian units further north. Between these lay the territory of Simco (*i.e.*, Ismail) Agha of the Shekak

Kurds; and the allied liaison officers conceived the notion that these three elements might be combined into a coherent line of defence.

Simco was the Agha whom we mentioned on page 228 as anxious to acquire a British consul's Mannlicher rifle at the price of his newly married wife. At Kotur he held a position of high strategic importance; and he commanded a considerable following, comprising some 2000 horse. He had participated two years previously in the combined attack on the Assyrians; but it was thought he would feel no scruples about changing sides, if it could be shown that it was worth his while. And certainly he had no cause to love the Persians; for his own brother (and predecessor in the chieftainship) was that same Jaffar who had been so foully assassinated at Tabriz by the ex-Shah when he was *Vali Ahd*.[165]

The scheme on the whole was a good one and its advantages were obvious. But it had one fatal objection—the connecting link was a Kurd. Hanpartsunian, the Armenian leader, was most reluctant to admit him to the league; and when Mar Shimun heard the proposal he shared his reluctance to the full. But in those days British officers were rather inclined to assume that Kurds were "indifferent honest." It is believed that after four years' experience of administration in Mesopotamia they would now vote this theory obsolete.

Despite their rooted prejudices to the contrary, the Armenian and Assyrian chieftains allowed themselves to be over-persuaded, and the plan won acquiescence from their followers. Simco embraced it with enthusiasm, and swore upon the Koran to keep faith with his Christian associates, protesting (somewhat anomalously) that he{379} regarded the Assyrian Patriarch as "the Religious Head of Kurdistan."

This ill-assorted alliance was soon to be crucially tested. Some Russian assistance had been counted upon, and 250

Russian officers were to have undertaken the organisation of the combined force. But the officers never arrived; and what Russian force still remained in the district gradually melted away to nothing. Russia was no longer only a falling wall whose collapse might be averted by buttressing. The very bricks of which it was built had disintegrated, and resolved into the mud from which they had been made.

It was now February, 1918—not yet quite the darkest hour upon the Western Front, but already very nearly so. And in the East the collapse of Russia had completely convinced all waverers that Germany and her allies had virtually won the war. The all-conquering Mackensen was rumoured to be already on his way to assume the command at Mosul, and to besom the British out of Mesopotamia; and Ijlal el Mulk plucked up heart of grace, and issued a grandiose proclamation ordering the Assyrians to lay down their arms.

Mar Shimun wrote a letter of protest to Mukht-i-Shems, the Persian Governor of Tabriz, reiterating that his people were merely refugees, and carried arms solely for their own protection. But these were facts of which the Persians had, of course, been fully aware for two years and more. They did not want an apology—only a pretext for falling on their unwelcome guests.

Then abruptly the flash-point was reached. For some weeks an explosion had manifestly been growing inevitable, but what precisely caused it was never known. There was a sudden outbreak at Urmi—two days of sharp street fighting—and the Moslems were crushed decisively, and the Assyrians remained masters of the town.

Foiled utterly in open warfare, the Persians turned at once to their more familiar trade of treachery; and Mukht-i-Shems, the official representative of his nation, a Persian nobleman with an English education, wrote plainly to{380} Simco Agha to tell him that he might earn the gratitude of

the Persian Government by the assassination of Mar Shimun. The Kurd took the hint promptly. He had already been growing uneasy at the conviction that after all he had espoused the losing side; and now he wrote to Mar Shimun (who by this time had returned to Salmas), requesting that he would meet him at a conference to discuss the new situation caused by the Russian debacle.

The trap was cunningly baited. Such a conference seemed not merely desirable, but imperative. What could be more natural under the circumstances than a meeting between two sworn allies? And Mar Shimun, accompanied by his brother David and a few other friends, drove out to the Armenian village of Koni Shehr, which was the appointed meeting-place.

There were whispers that treachery was intended. An Armenian villager was told by a friendly Kurd: "There is no danger for *your* folk"; and on this he at once sent off his son with a warning message, which was unhappily disregarded. As the party entered the house where the meeting was to be held, David pointed to a group of Kurds upon a neighbouring roof, and asked "what those fellows wanted." But the Patriarch had seemingly determined that he must "trust all in all, or not at all." "They only want to get a good view, I suppose," he answered, and passed in.

Simco received him most cordially. The ceremonial hospitality, which throughout the East is held to set the seal of inviolability upon the guest's person, was duly offered and accepted. The conference proceeded, and terminated without the least hint of disagreement; and Simco, with marked deference, conducted his guest to the door.

His turning back was the signal. There was a volley from the roof, and the Patriarch was shot dead. It was an almost literal repetition of the treachery perpetrated upon Simco's own brother by the *Vali Ahd* eight years before. How David escaped is a mystery. He was wounded, but

friendly Armenians snatched him into one of the adjoining houses and hid him till the search was over. In the ensuing confusion only one other member of the{381} party was actually killed and the rest succeeded in escaping.

The Patriarch's body was treated with the grossest indignity—stripped, and flung out into the street. But afterwards it was reverently taken up by the Armenians and buried by their priest in the village church. In those medieval times to which Benyamin Mar Shimun belonged alike by character and training that church would be held to enshrine the relics of a martyr.

The almost incredulous fury with which the wild tribesmen learned the news of their beloved Patriarch's murder can, perhaps, be barely imagined by people less primitive than they. In the first gust of their rage they began a massacre of the Kurds in Urmi; but this was quickly arrested by the interposition of their chiefs. Polus a younger brother, was chosen as the Patriarch's successor; and under David and Khoshaba a strong force mustered to avenge his death.

With these two there marched a third leader. And among the many disreputable characters who "made good" during war-time, it can surely not be easy to find a parallel to Petros of Baz—that knavish exploiter of bogus Macedonian orphanages, whose shady antecedents were recounted on page 218. With the fruits of his youthful peculations he had acquired a prominent position in Urmi, no less than that of Ottoman consul. Thus, as soon as the war broke out, he was able to pose as a leader; and from the husk of a glib-tongued swindler there now emerged a born Captain of *guerilleros*, whose achievements during these later stages were among the most remarkable in the war. Like several others of his kidney, he has since (we regret to say) reverted. But assuredly, while the ball lasted it cannot be denied that this arch-thief showed a singularly handsome leg.

Simco's army was thoroughly routed and his castle at Chara captured; but he himself unhappily escaped and has since been allowed even by the allies of his victim, to reap all the profits of his crime. In his house was found the actual letter which he had received from Mukht-i-Shems prompting him to the Patriarch's murder. Can it be wondered that the wrath of the Assyrians burns yet{382} more hotly against the Persian than it does against the Turk?

But the crushing of their false friend did not deminish the number of their enemies. The Christians were now threatened on all sides by Turk, by Kurd, and by Persian; and in Urmi they had to control a seething hostile community considerably more numerous than themselves. The British advance from Baghdad had still penetrated no higher than Tekrit, 250 miles to the southward; and all hope of Russian help was gone. They were still well off for munitions; but the bulk of the lavish supplies which had been intended for the armament of Russia had fallen into the hands of their enemies, and the Turkish armies in Eastern Asia Minor were now equipped as no Turkish armies in that district had ever been equipped before.

There still remained, however, some scattered contingents of Armenians—unhappily divided against themselves by bitter internecine dissensions—and with one of these led by a grim fighter named Andranik who commanded a personal following of about 5000, there was still some chance of effecting a junction. Petros got into communication with him, and a plan was concerted to this end.

Had the plan succeeded it is probable, in the light of subsequent events, that the Assyrians would have been able to keep their hold upon Urmi until the Armistice. But the Turks held the interior lines and Ali Ihsan, their commander in this district, was unluckily a General of considerable capacity. He flung himself across Petros' path

as he pressed northward and repulsed his attempt to break through. Petros, better as a tactician than as a strategist, unhappily did not renew the assault at the moment when perseverance might have earned victory; and Ali Ihsan, in the nick of time, was able to turn upon Andranik, and beat him back after a long day's desperate fighting in the streets of Khoi.

Nevertheless the Assyrians still continued to present a bold front to their enemies; and for three months, under Petros' able leadership, they beat back in battle after battle{383} all the attacks that were delivered against them both north and south of Urmi. They are said to have fought no fewer than fourteen actions in this time. In one of these, at Ushnu, they captured nearly 350 Turkish regular soldiers, besides 5 machine guns and 2 pieces of field artillery; and with almost unbelievable generosity these prisoners were released upon parole.

"But what of your Kurdish prisoners, Saypu?" we asked of the stalwart young warrior whose maiden exploit in arms we related on page 315.

"We took no Kurdish prisoners, Rabbi," replied Saypu grimly, "after the death of Mar Shimun."

Their humanity is more to their credit, since they knew well the fate of their kinsfolk in the outlying villages which they were forced to abandon, and might learn thence to what fate they themselves were doomed should they fail to make good their defence. Ali Ihsan had now gone southward to take over the command at Mosul, and to be defeated by General Marshall in the last battle of the war. The Turkish leader in the north was now Jevdet Bey, previously Vali of Van, the brutal son of kind old Tahir and brother-in-law of Enver Pasha, a man who had already earned eternal infamy by his pitiless massacres of the Armenians at Van. Now on one occasion he forced the entire population of a village, numbering it is said 700, and including all the women and children, to dig a deep trench

for their own grave along the foot of a lofty mud wall. When the trench was finished they were marched into it. The wall was thrown down on the top of them; and every soul was buried alive. On another occasion a village, which had defended itself to the last cartridge, surrendered at last on fair conditions which the Turks solemnly confirmed by oaths taken on the Koran. Every male was immediately massacred; every female stripped and outraged, and then turned adrift naked to crawl to Urmi as she could.

Such incidents are, of course, but samples of hundreds of similar atrocities perpetrated by the Turks upon their Christian helots during the recent war. Neither is it permissible for any honest chronicler to leave them unrecorded,{384} so long as there are any advocates for a policy of leaving Christians subject to Turks.

And the cruel mercies of Islam seemed now closing round the Assyrians. Their fighting force was steadily dwindling and now their ammunition was running out. The end was almost in sight; but once more there came a gleam of hope just as the last hope seemed extinguished, and an aeroplane appeared over Urmi on July 8th, 1918. It was saluted with a hot fusillade, for all, of course, deemed it Turkish. But presently it dawned upon someone that the tricoloured circles were not a Turkish emblem, and it was wildly welcomed to earth. Captain Pennington of the Royal Air Force had flown from Miani in the south over 150 miles of unknown and hostile country; and, having escaped his friends' bullets, was next nearly suffocated by their embraces, for all, of course, argued (Oriental-like) that their final relief was now assured.

But Captain Pennington was no more than the far-advanced scout of a woefully weak flying column, consisting of a machine-gun company and a squadron of the 14th Hussars; and these had only penetrated as far as the village of Sain Kaleh, 100 miles to the south. Yet he

bore a message of hope. They had escorted thither a first instalment of money, munitions, and officers; and if only the Assyrians could gain touch with them these supplies might enable them to hold out.

But how could touch be established? Urmi was now menaced by a force of two Turkish divisions—the 5th from the north and the 6th from the south—and by large irregular levies of Kurds and Persians as well. It was agreed that Petros, with the Urmi division of his army, should attempt to clear the way to Sain Kaleh; and that the Salmas division should hold on to Urmi till his return. It was once more a desperate chance; but the Assyrians had only preserved themselves hitherto by taking a whole series of desperate chances. Unhappily, on this occasion, they could only partly win through.

Petros marched south, and, with his usual skill and daring, defeated the 6th Division at Suj Bulak, and drove{385} them into the mountains towards Rowanduz. But, unfortunately, the 5th Division learned of his departure, and seized the opportunity to deliver a vigorous assault upon those who had remained behind. The line of the Nazlu River, which the Assyrians had sought to hold was forced; and the defeated mountaineers swept back in confusion upon Urmi. Panic seized upon that hapless city. Under the protection of the Assyrians it had become a sort of asylum of refuge for thousands of fugitives who had escaped from previous massacres; and now the whole Christian population—Assyrian and Armenian, men, women, and children—determined instantly on flight. Harvest had just been gathered, so they had food available, and enough beasts and vehicles to improvise some kind of transport; and soon the whole mob was trailing southward in an agony of terror and despair. Somewhere in that direction lay their last faint hope of survival, and, heedless of order or discipline, they fled in Petros' wake.

That flight was a ghastly tragedy, comparable perhaps,

while it lasted, only to that terrible trek of the Calmuck Tartars so graphically depicted by De Quincey. Provisions, indeed, were adequate; and, had they been unmolested, the fugitives might have won through without very great loss or suffering. But their enemies swarmed on their tracks like wolves upon a drove of cattle. Even before they cleared the city the bazaar ruffians under Mejid es Sultaneh freed from the fear of their recent masters, were cutting the throats of the stragglers as they emerged from their houses; and hampered by hosts of non-combatants—dispirited and without cohesion—that long, slow, straggling convoy formed a fatally vulnerable prey. The mountaineers, indeed, suffered less than the townsfolk as being more accustomed than they to conditions of trek and battle. It was even said, unkindly but plausibly, that the Tyari men eventually reached their journey's end not only with all their women, but with more sheep than they had at the start. But for all the conditions were terrible enough. Men were slaughtered by hundreds; women stripped and outraged; girls borne off to Mussulman harems; and many{386} who dropped from the ranks were seen to roll themselves in filth and ordure in the hope of escaping the violation which they knew was their probable fate. It must be within the mark to state that at least 15,000 persons—a fourth of the whole number—perished in those dreadful days.

The British were no longer at Sain Kaleh. Petros had been a week late at his rendezvous, and they had strict orders not to linger in such a perilously advanced position. But happily they were not beyond recall, and, with Petros' army to back them, they now hurried back to bring aid. That handful of well-armed and disciplined men fell like a thunderbolt into the midst of the disorderly hordes of the pursuers, and, ignorant what force might be following, these scattered before them in dismay. There was one instance where seven men equipped with a Lewis gun, and

led by Captains Savage and Scott-Ollson, dashed at a force of several hundred Kurds who were besetting a group of fugitives, and drove them off in confusion—a feat that might have earned a lay in the annals of the Round Table.

It took three days' sharp fighting to complete the rescue, for the fugitives only struggled in by driblets and the Kurds and Persians who clung to them were loth to relinquish their prey. But at last the Assyrians' purgatory was over. The column was re-formed at Sain Kaleh and proceeded by easier stages 200 miles further southward to Hamadan. They were blamed for plundering on this march; and, undoubtedly, they did plunder wholesale. But what wonder? They were utterly destitute and had surely every possible excuse for regarding Persia as an enemy country. And be it recorded to their honour that by the admission even of their enemies, and though the atrocities that their own women had suffered were still fresh in their memories even now no Mussulman woman was insulted or maltreated by them.

Early in September they were transferred to the great refugee camp which had been prepared for their reception at Baquba on the Diala near Baghdad; and here they were established when Turkey sued for peace a few weeks later. Not less than two-thirds of their nation must have perished in their four years' trial; but, like Sir Hugh Percy, they {387} had "saved the bird in their bosom," and assuredly had no cause for shame in the plucky part that they had played.

The fate of their neighbours, the Armenians, is already too well known to be dwelt upon, but, alas! too little regarded, for us to pass over it even here. We have sketched the horrors endured by one small sister community—a community whose position was admittedly much more defensible, and whose stout-hearted resistance enabled them to avert the worst. Multiply those horrors twenty fold to allow for the greater numbers of the Armenians. Double them again for the helplessness that

robbed them of self-defence. And our minds are incapable of grasping the scope of a butchery more hideous and widespread than any that has horrified Asia since the ravages of the Tartar hordes. “Then there took place such wholesale slaughter and unrestrained looting and excessive torture and mutilation as is hard to hear spoken of, even generally; how think you, then, of the details? There happened things I dare not mention, therefore imagine what you will.”[166]

Nay, the Tartar massacres after all were mostly perpetrated in hot blood, and in days that followed close upon battles; but these advisedly, upon unresisting helots, and persistently for months and years. In these the blind fury of the fanatic and the blood-lust of the Kurdish robber were deliberately manipulated by cool-headed and calculating administrators. And even Abdul Hamid’s cruelty was not so coarse and stupid as that of the low-bred upstarts who now reigned in his room.

Talaat Pasha’s own letters are extant to prove how he hounded on his underlings to the butchery; how he dismissed and disgraced those who shrank from the ghastly tasks imposed upon them; nay, even those who permitted the slightest alleviation of horrors at which their souls sickened; how he insisted repeatedly and categorically that not even children must be spared. And Enver and Djemal, his fellow-triumvirs, seconded him inexorably in all.

That some Turks did venture on protests we are ready to admit gladly; but with the bulk of the nation the crime{388} was actually popular. No Mollah raised his voice to denounce it; and there was never the least difficulty in finding plenty of willing executioners. The crime was the crime of the Ottoman nation and of the Stamboul Caliphate, and the criminals are still rejoicing in the success and impunity of their crime.

The programme of massacre was identical in practically every district. First, the chief local leaders of the

Armenians (Parliamentary Deputies and so forth) were quietly entrapped and assassinated before their vague forebodings had ripened into serious alarm. Then those who had been called up for military service (of course, the pick of the nation) were disarmed, drafted into labour battalions, and set to road-making and other tasks in remote and sparsely populated districts, where they were soon worn out with hard work, exposure, and starvation, or shot down at leisure in idle sport by their armed guards. Then all the better class townsfolk—doctors, teachers, merchants, tradesmen, and artificers—were arrested, formed into columns, and marched away from their homes, ostensibly for some distant destination. It was arranged that armed Kurds (or their own escort) should fall upon them during the journey; and all that was known of them subsequently was that they had never arrived. The villages and towns were then sacked in detail, and the men almost all exterminated, though young and good-looking girls were reserved for the Mussulman harems. If any pretext were needed, it was generally supplied by demanding the surrender of a stated number of rifles, which it was assumed that the villagers were concealing, and torture was often applied to extort what they had never possessed.

Then the "Red Massacres" were over, and the "White Massacres" started. The victims of these were mostly the miserable women and their children—practically all who still survived. These were formed up into columns and literally marched to death. With bleeding feet, starving and unsheltered, they were driven pitilessly forward—day after day, week after week—on a march that was never intended to have any ending till the last of them had dropped and died.{389} And such of them as survived to cross the Taurus were finally thrust forth into the bleak foodless waterless desert; Talaat professing with fiendish effrontery that he was thus "colonising Mesopotamia."

Surely if ever assassination was justified it was in the

death of this monster, and it is the shame of all Europe that it was to an assassin that they left the task.

We have said that some Turks protested, and were deprived of their offices for protesting. The Vali of Aleppo and the Mutaserif of Mardin were two of these. In some towns the Moslem population presented petitions against the massacres. In Urfa—even in fanatical Urfa—there was one such petition sent in. Diarbekr was true to its grim traditions, and here there was no relenting. Here the notables of the city had formed a "Committee for the Study of the Armenian Question," and the fruit of their "Studies" was a revival of Carrier's infamous *noyades*. The clothes of which the victims were stripped before they were flung overboard were, with sickening shamelessness, sold openly by their executioners in the bazaar.

At Mosul the sword was stayed; we cannot conceive for what reason. But perhaps the Arabs, though equally keen robbers, were not found such practised butchers as the Kurds.

Jevdet Bey, the Vali of Van, was one of the most relentless murderers; and the thoroughness of his methods in the villages of his *Vilayet* even caused him to be employed as an expert in redeeming slackness elsewhere. But of Van city itself—thanks to its proximity to the frontier—he made rather a botched job. Aram, the Tashnakist whom we mentioned in an earlier chapter[167] was by accident absent from the city when the other two local leaders were assassinated. The Armenians took alarm betimes and stood on their defence.

Van was a large sprawling city, and the Armenians formed rather the larger half of the population. They had much{390} previous experience of massacres and alarms of massacre; and they now drew together instinctively in their own quarter of the Garden City, and fortified themselves with abattis and barricades. They sent a message to their Moslem fellow-citizens that they had no quarrel with them

and were only defending themselves against the Vali. And the Moslems replied sympathetically though they said they would be obliged to fight.

Perhaps it was owing to their lukewarmness that Jevdet, though supported by the regular soldiers of the garrison, never ventured to deliver a formal assault upon the entrenched quarter; but there was much desultory fighting, and most of the city was burned. Jevdet relied principally upon blockading his victims, and reducing them by hunger; and, to quicken their surrender, he even refrained from massacring the few surviving villagers, and drove them into the entrenchments to help in consuming supplies. After four weeks' leaguer this scheme was on the point of succeeding, when suddenly the despairing Armenians saw their enemies preparing to withdraw. The Russians advancing from Sara Hamish had approached within striking distance, and next day Van was relieved.

When the Russians withdrew a little later the Armenians, of course, fled with them, and took refuge across the border, near Tiflis and Erivan. How many of them, we wonder, have survived their later tribulations—war, famine, typhus, internecine strife and Bolshevism?

And the motive for all this butchery? The alleged "plot" is merely a subterfuge. The Armenians would, no doubt, have welcomed the coming of the Russians; what subject race in Turkey would not? But, until the Russians arrived, they were no more a menace to the rear of the Turks than the citizens of occupied Belgium were to the rear of the Germans. There is something, perhaps, in the suggestion that one motive was sheer plunder. Many Armenians were wealthy; and the Turks, impoverished by a series of wars, were intent on seizing their wealth, never reflecting that by the extermination of their cleverest traders, and their best artificers and husbandmen, they were only consigning themselves{391} to a deeper and more hopeless poverty. There was certainly also a religious motive; for, though we

can hardly say that the profession of Islam would in all cases have secured quarter, yet it is certain that this was made an essential condition in the sparing of the few who were spared. And what but religious bigotry could have involved the Jacobites in the fate of the Armenians? There was no plot to fear from the Jacobites. They had neither the cohesion nor the national aspirations of the Armenians. Their escapes in previous massacres prove that the Turks could have spared them if they wished. And yet this time they were not spared.

But professed infidels like Talaat and Enver are not swayed by religious bigotry. It was national and political bigotry that was the ruling motive with them. They only consented to the sparing of apostates because apostasy in those regions sets the seal upon the abjuration of nationality. And in the Ottoman Empire they meant the Turk to reign alone. In their extirpation of the Armenians the Young Turks were carrying out a deliberate national policy, conceived by the Old Turks more than a generation before. And the Young Turks, taking it over, had only been waiting their opportunity till the preoccupation of Europe should leave their hands untied.

It only remains to add that the Yezidis were not massacred. And, even in such a plethora of massacres, it is strange they should have suffered such neglect. We can only suppose that *Melek Taüs*, seeing all idle hands so desirably occupied, devoted his unaccustomed leisure to taking care of his own.{392}

CHAPTER XVIII

DEAD SEA FRUIT

THE tale of the British administration of Mesopotamia (or Irak) is the familiar one of magnificent work done by men

on the spot, which is yet hampered by the feebleness and indecision of "statesmen" at home, coupled with the activities of newspapers interested mainly in what an expert of old time, George III., called "that damnably dirty business, party politics." The tale, however—though one that is well worth the telling—is too long a one to be put in at the end of a book dealing with only a part of the land concerned, and here we must confine ourselves to that of which we have personal knowledge—viz., the fortunes of the tormented Assyrian nation after they reached "the haven where they would be," the protection of the British. General affairs can only be touched on so far as they concern this people.

We left the nation established in the huge refugee camp at Baqubah, near Baghdad, where they became one of the sights and sensations of Mesopotamia. They considered that their troubles were over at last, and, indeed, one of their number even broke out into English poetry to celebrate the fact, and presented his ode (which he would have been better advised to write in Syriac) to the General Officer commanding the camp:

We wish to express our thanks and great wish
To all our friends, especially the British;
For we are under the protection of the world's greatest monarch,
Who to us in this wilderness is like the shadow of the rock.

All gentlemen from the headquarters,
Soldiers, sergeants, corporals, and officers,
All sisters and doctors, with bottles number one, two, three,
They have from typhoid and relapsing fever made us free!

{393}

The idea of the people was that they would very speedily be put back, under British protection, in their old homes; and that full compensation (and incidentally full revenge) for all past sufferings and losses would be assured them. They were the allies of the victors in the war; and there

was, of course, no limit either to the power or the wealth of their British protectors. The inability of European statesmen to make a peace at all,[168] and the fact that the British Government, in consequence, could not make up its mind what it wanted to do, or could do, either with the country at large or with this relatively small factor in it, were matters simply outside their mental horizon. "Our own country, under British protection," was their simple and intelligible demand; a "benevolent" government was all that British authorities could promise them in return, and, meantime, there was nothing to do but to wait. If you maintain anyone in idleness, you soon produce a pauper with all a pauper's vices. Assyrians proved no exception to that rule, and paupers they soon became, taking all that was given, and expecting more. They declined to do even necessary camp work without payment; and the quarrelsomeness and disposition to intrigue that have been their bane since the beginning appeared among them again.

One thing, however, they could do which was useful—they could fight. A double battalion of infantry, with one mounted company, was raised from among them, and put under picked British officers. Such officers, as has been shown many a time, can make good soldiers out of far worse material than warlike mountaineers; and the mutual regard that is usual in such cases soon grew up between the officers and their men. "See that lad there?" said one of these officers to the writer. "He sprained his ankle on the way down, but he turned up on parade with it next day hideously swollen. He only burst out crying when I told him he must not march, and went off to a bonesetter, who slashed it all round with a blunt knife and rubbed in gunpowder. Then{394} he turned up again, begging to be allowed to march with the regiment!"

It is true that some difficulties arose. It had been intended to raise two battalions: one of mountaineers, and one of Urmi men. The latter, however (owing to the

mistaken advice of some foreign friends), demanded impossible conditions of service; while the mountain men declared their readiness to go anywhere, if only they had British officers to lead them. The double battalion was raised, in consequence, of the mountain men alone. Then Petros Agha, who was now describing himself as the "Commander-in-Chief of the Assyrian Army," demanded as of right that any contingent raised should be under his orders, with such British officers to assist him as he judged expedient. When this modest demand was refused, he began intriguing against the project, till it became necessary to shepherd him gently out of the camp, and suggest Baghdad (or India) as his residence in future. The force was raised however, and the little campaign that became necessary against the Kurds in the summer of 1919 gave these hillmen an opportunity of getting as near to their own conception of heaven as some of them are ever likely to get, for they were given good rifles and good leaders, and a real chance of a slap at their hereditary enemies!

Experienced judges were loud in praise of their marching and fighting capacities, though admitting that they were "a trifle indiscriminate" at times. "Those Assyrians have got into it quick," said the G.O.C. on one occasion, noting how quickly the men opened fire in their advance up a hill they had been ordered to clear of the enemy. "Oh no, sir," said an A.D.C., who had experience of the creature; "I'll bet what you like it's a pig they are firing at!" He did them but a small injustice; it was a bear and not a boar; but having finished him, they cleared the hill. "How did the Assyrians really do in the fighting?" asked a British officer of a Subadar of the Gurkhas with whom they were brigaded. "Why did you not give us the same mountain sandals that they wear?" came the answer. "Then we should have done as well as they did!" Verily, when{395} Gurkhas apologise for not doing as well as the

irregular, there is no fault to find with the fighting capacity of the latter.[169]

Once, it must be admitted, a party of them found civilised campaigning too slow, and committed the heinous crime of deserting while on active service; but the apology they sent in (in a mixture of Syriac and English) went far to redeem their fault. “To the beloved and reverend Major Knight, our Commander, peace and love be multiplied,” it began. “Dear Father, be it known to you that we did not run away because we did not wish to kill Kurds, but because we so wished to kill them; and by the blessing of God, we have been doing that thing for ten days. Regret to report following casualty: soldier, private, one. But we have killed a lot more Kurds. Now, dear Father, if you will promise to punish us yourself, we will come in. But we fear going to Mosul Gaol.”

The Major promised that if they came in he would punish them all right, and he did so; but he subsequently squared matters somehow with his conscience, and reported that there had been a gratifying absence of crime on active service!

The campaign had the effect of clearing what is known as the Sapna area of Kurds; and, incidentally, the house of the English Mission at Bibaydi, the building of which has been referred to,[170] was fortified and occupied by British{396} troops. Those old enemies of the writer who had prophesied that “if that house is built we shall see British troops in it before our beards are grey,” were so delighted at the fulfilment of their prophecy, and at the local kudos that it brought them, that they entirely forgot their ill-feeling against the Englishman who had caused it, and greeted him on a visit as a long-lost friend![171]

Men on the spot now held that the Assyrian problem could be solved at once; the nation could be settled in the area that they had helped to clear and conquer, where they would be an admirable frontier guard for the future state of

Irak. Suggestions to this effect were sent home, but no answer was returned. Those in authority could neither allow the men on the spot to act for themselves, nor could they produce any other plan. It was not that they objected (that would at least have been positive action of a sort), but they neither could, nor would, say or do anything; and so time passed until local circumstances (notably the impossibility of keeping British troops dangling in the hills till folk in comfortable offices at home had made up what they pleased to call their minds) made a withdrawal inevitable, and a promising scheme impossible.

By a very unfortunate decision the Assyrian contingent was disbanded shortly after this, owing to some breaches of discipline in the corps. Men who were at least being kept from idleness were thus returned to Baqubah, where a policy of pauperising was sapping all the morale of the nation; and where Assyrian and British, tied up together under uncomfortable conditions for too long, were rapidly getting on one another's nerves, and each showing the other their worst side! About the same time, too, the nation was deprived of its titular leader by the death of Polus Mar Shimun, their patriarch. Tuberculosis brought on by hardship had{397} become worse in the dust-laden air of Baqubah, and a removal to the purer air of Sheikh Mattai[172] by Mosul had been too late to stop the disease. A flicker of improvement at the last had encouraged him as is so often the case, and he returned to his own people, but only to die. Meantime Authority, both in Mesopotamia and England, was getting very anxious to be rid of the Assyrians—as is frequently the case, when a man knows that he has neglected a good opportunity of getting a thing done. And it was at this juncture, when the nation had no titular head and all were anxious to be rid of an incubus, that Agha Petros came forward with a new scheme. Somewhat to the north of the area occupied by the British was a stretch of relatively fertile land, extending from the

plain of Gawar to the town of Ushnu, which had once been largely Christian and was now practically derelict. To the east it stretched nearly to the Urmi plain; on the west it bordered on the Hakkiari mountains. Petros proposed to lead up the whole nation, duly armed, and to occupy this "Gawar-Ushnu" area. There they would be in a state of practical independence under his rule, and those Urmi folk who wished to return to their own homes could do so, while Hakkiari would be open to the mountaineers. The fighting men could go up first and take seizin[AA?] of the land, and the women and non-combatants could follow after a little.

The scheme was not impossible, provided that the people had enough of cohesion to unite on any scheme at all, and Petros enough of the statesman in him to enable him to execute any. If feasible, it certainly had the merit of providing an Anglophile buffer state just where one was most wanted; and as such, and as offering some means of getting the refugees off the shoulders of the British taxpayer, it was accepted by the Mesopotamian authorities, and urged with more or less of authority on the nation at large. Under this pressure, the bulk of the nation accepted it; though it is to be feared that one of its merits in their eyes was its indefiniteness, and the fact that it could be interpreted by everybody in his own sense. An Assyrian state with a measure{398} (undefined) of British protection was what everyone wanted; but everyone also assumed that the area of the supposed state would include his own old home. And it is to be feared that Petros Agha[173] got a large measure of his support by promises to the effect that everybody should have just what he wanted, if only he was willing to come up with his true national leader to get it!

Even so the Patriarchal House, and certain sections of the mountaineers as well, rejected the scheme, owing to their rooted distrust of Petros and all his works. This, however, was disregarded. The "House," left leaderless by

the death of the Patriarch, and by the fact that Surma Khanim (possessor of the best brain in it) had gone to England to put the case of her nation before the Government[174] was just then at a discount in the nation and had left the camp for Mosul. It was therefore ignored. It was assumed that the recalcitrant sections would follow with the rest when they found themselves alone; and so preparations were made for the breaking-up of the Baqubah camp, and the transfer of its inmates to Mindan (north-east of Mosul), which could be the base of the new move.

Assyrian ill-luck, however, dogged the scheme throughout. Time was of the essence of the plan, if several thousand people had to be got up to a high tableland, and there to provide food and shelter for themselves before the winter set in, and one cause of delay after another supervened. There was a change in the central authority first, for Sir{399} Arnold Wilson, acting Chief Commissioner, was not only removed from office, but practically dismissed from the service of the King. Politicians at home found it convenient to make the good man on the spot the scapegoat for the fact that the policy they had approved was more expensive than they had anticipated, and were full of virtuous indignation because he did not effect in Mesopotamia the drastic economies which they could not themselves enforce in England. A new Chief Commissioner (Sir Percy Cox) was soon in the field; but the change implied delay, and the new man had not (owing perhaps to his home instructions) that power of giving a quick decision on a question which had been one of the strong points of his predecessor. Sir Percy, however, approved the general lines of the policy laid down, and the move to Mindan was in full swing when the Arab rising of 1920 put a stop to all action. All fighting men and all transport were imperatively needed elsewhere, and the Assyrian problem had to wait.

The story of the rising itself does not concern us, though the fighting men of the Assyrians were actively engaged in it in support of the Government. Men began to ask what new form of lunacy had possessed those in authority, that they had disbanded an existing force composed of such good material, and so absolutely trustworthy. It is true that some of the fighting was pure self-defence, for the Baqubah camp was left to look after itself, in the assurance that Assyrians could do so, but in forgetfulness of the fact that they had been disarmed! For some time the place was in real peril, particularly when a train loaded with rifles and ammunition for its defence was derailed some miles from camp.

The force raised in the camp, however, though then armed with a "scratch" armament, rescued the train and its contents,[175] and from that time forward the camp was in a state of safety. Skirmishes took place near it, and after one of these the combatants boasted to their British officer{400} of the number of Arabs whom they had accounted for. "Oh, rubbish!" said the officer. "I know how many bullets go astray, and you need not tell me you hit as many as that." The disgusted mountaineers said nothing; but after the next action laid out before a rather horrified Englishman a large number of human ears—right ears all of them. "Look here, sahib! You can't say we didn't hit those fellows, anyhow!" Those who already had been transported to Mindan, though outside the real area of the rising, were not entirely deprived of their share of the fun. A disorderly tribe of Kurds, the Surchi, thought that so good an opportunity of making trouble ought not to be missed, and undertook a raid in the Akra district. The Assyrians had the satisfaction of sweeping the raiders into the Zab, and of thus restoring order in that corner of the world.

While this was being done, steps had been taken in Baqubah camp which tended to split up an already divided

nation still further. Polus Mar Shimun, the Patriarch, had died as stated, and the larger half of the nation had been removed, under the leadership of Petros Agha, to Mindan. Those who remained took that opportunity of electing and consecrating Ishai, son of David d'Mar Shimun and nephew of Polus and Benyamin, to the Patriarchate—the new prelate being a child of twelve years old! It is true that, according to the old "*natar cursiya* system"[176] this lad was the lawful heir of his departed uncle; but even so the election, according to that very tribal custom to which they were appealing, was an affair for the whole nation, and not of a minority in it. The electing party looked on themselves as the "faithful remnant," who remained loyal to the old head of the tribes when the bulk of them had gone off after a new leader who was not of the Sacred House; and also urged, not too consistently, that the "Mindan seceders" had, in fact, knowledge of the proceeding, and made no objection to it. In spite of this defence, the step was a disastrous and improper one; a decision that, in the opinion of the wiser of the party responsible, would not have been taken "had Surma{401} *Khanim* been here."[177] It divided the nation when union was the one necessity, and degraded the Patriarch into a mere party leader; while at the same time it gave a fresh lease of life to just those ancient anomalies (such as the hereditary Patriarchate and the temporal power of the holder of that office) which men of experience saw had outlived their usefulness, and for which they were seeking to provide a decent euthanasia. However, the thing was done and could not be undone, though the British Director of Repatriation marked his disapproval of a step which he did not feel entitled to forbid, by giving an order that no British officer was to attend the consecration ceremony.

The Arab rising flickered out in due course, but the summer had passed before the rising did; and when the question of the Assyrian settlement came up again, those

who knew the country shook their heads over the prospect of moving masses of population at such a season of the year. October had begun—the month that sees the first snows on the hills—and there were signs of an early winter. Warnings to that effect, however, were disregarded, and the Assyrian force that was to go up and clear the ground under Petros Agha was concentrated at Akra.[178] and made ready for its march. It numbered about 5,000 men—mountaineers and Urmi men combined—and made an impressive show under a multitude of cross-bearing banners. High titles abounded, for Petros as Commander-in-Chief was at least liberal in this direction. A "Field-Marshal" served under him, sporting crossed batons on his khaki-clad shoulders, with Generals, Brigadier-Generals, and Colonels by the score. But if titles were plenty, experience was far to seek; and{402} considering what a tremendous risk was being run in sending up the force at all, at so late a date as the end of October, there was a marvellous casualness shown about the whole affair. Those in authority seemed to be only anxious to be rid of the people and the problem together, and to act on the assumption that if once they could be got over the boundary all would go well, or that at least the British Government would not be concerned if it did not. Good rifles were provided, with ammunition, some mountain-guns, and plenty of mules for transport. There was also a big dump of provisions, and medical stores in abundance; but when the Assyrians wanted to leave these behind, those who were there to protect these wild people from their own folly and ignorance allowed them to do so; and the force moved off with not so much as a bandage, with provisions for a short seven days, and no means of securing a regular supply after that. In fact, these people who were in theory to go up to a land, occupy and colonise it, and maintain themselves there for a winter, were allowed to go off with the equipment of a raid and nothing else!

The British officers who were to accompany the force "in a purely advisory capacity" (three British Lieutenants, to wit) made some representations, urging in particular the provision of proper pack-saddles for the mountain-guns sent with the force. They were told the guns could go on their own carriages, as it would be a stiff pull over Akra Dagh, but plain sailing after that! A man who can stand at Akra, and think that the rugged ridge behind that town is the only obstacle between him and Gawar Plain, has the strangest ideas of the land he is sending his subordinates into!

No doubt Petros was to blame. An Assyrian who wants to get to a place will tell you that the road is easy, with the gayest defiance of facts; and men who will go off with a small raiding party, with no equipment save rifles and the clothes they wear, have not the least notion that "an army cannot charge in and out again like a troop of hussars." Those who directed this "Repatriation" were supposed to know something of that most difficult of problems, land transport{403} in country where no mechanical means are available; but they did not force the Assyrians to benefit by their knowledge.

The frontier was crossed; the Zab, swollen by recent rain, was crossed also, though with some difficulty in the face of opposition from the local Kurds, of the Barzan and Zibar tribes. These were swept aside, however, though in the action Petros rather amused the British officers by the fact that he would persist in firing his few guns at the mountain landscape at large. "Hadn't you better wait till you have a target of some sort to fire at?" they urged. "You won't hurt the rocks, even if that is your object." "The noise will impress the Kurds," said Petros, and went on wasting his small supply of artillery cartridges. Barzan village was stormed and burned, the only remarkable piece of loot secured therein being a copy of the Book of Common Prayer. It bore the stamp of a Canadian parish

—"St. Luke, North Battleford, Saskatchewan. *Not to be taken away.*" Had the little book been able to speak, it might have told of strange adventures.

All this took time, however, and provisions began to fail. While the rations lasted, there had been little looting, if any; but when men are hungry it takes better discipline than that of such a force as this to keep them to their ranks and duty. Also, day after day of pitiless cold rain (such as is common in late autumn in this land) began to tell on the health and spirits of the Urmi plainsmen, who were quite unused to such conditions of travel as these. Many broke down altogether, more than 100 died on the way—the mortality among the animals being also very heavy—while hundreds abandoned rifles and gear, and turned back to the refuge of the British once more. The subsequent comment of the British officers on this proceeding was terse and forcible. Stripped of some rather unquotable verbiage, it amounts to the statement that a Tyari man may be as big a thief as heaven ever made, but at least he will leave his head before his rifle! In fact, one of the two wings into which the force was divided, that composed of Urmi men, had lost all spirit and "go" before they were half-way {404} through the mountains. Had they had to face an enemy of any enterprise, they would have been like sheep before the butcher.

At this moment news came from the mountaineers of Tyari and Tkhuma which, though different enough in character from that current among the plainsmen, was at least equally fatal as far as the success of the expedition was concerned. These clansmen formed the left, or western, of the two columns of advance, and when the defeated Zibari Kurds retired in the westerly direction, they had pursued them till they had lost touch with their Urmi companions. Now they were in their own mountains, free from all control, and well armed; their faces were toward their own homes, and also toward the homes of

their hereditary enemies.

What did they care for Urmi men and the settlement of Persia, when balanced against such a chance of loot and vengeance? Off they went on the raid, seeing in every Kurd a foe, in every village lawful prize. Nerwa and Rikan were turned out and burned, Tyari men being quite reckless of the fact that in all Kurdistan none had been so orderly and so loyal to the British as the men of these two districts! Word had gone to the Agha of Chal that he was to cut off the retreat of the fleeing Zibaris, and he had come out, more or less as an ally of the Assyrians, to do so. Either from deliberate treachery, or merely from the indiscipline natural in such a force, troops of the Tyari and Tkhuma men got round his flank and into his villages, and Chal also went up in flame and smoke. A glance at the map will show that their wild career had now brought them again to the Zab, and to the district of Berwar. Mira Reshid,[179] the biggest brigand in the district, now held this land as representing British Authority (having undergone, we hope, a change of soul like Petros Agha); and he now gathered his forces and held the bridges over the Zab in the name of King George, while a most naturally indignant British Political{405} officer was hurrying up from Dohuk with such police as he could gather. The mountaineers' wild career was now stayed, and like schoolboys who have broken bounds, anticipatory of dire consequences, but yet feeling that the "rag" had been worth it, they obeyed the angry master's orders, and returned to the plains and British authority. The Urmi men, feeling that they could do nothing by themselves, had also drifted back; and Petros Agha himself, having entirely lost his army, found that he and his "personal staff" could do nothing but follow their example. He reported on arrival that he had not been able to do what he intended, but he was sure that the Government would be pleased, "because the moral effect upon the Kurds was so extremely

good!”[180]

As it happened Government was anything but pleased; the whole expedition had failed, the money spent on it was wasted, the problem that they had hoped solved was still on their hands, and the Kurds, whom it was most important just then to keep quiet and contented, were all in a state of entirely justifiable suspicion and wrath. How could they be expected to believe that this was not what Government had intended? Those responsible for the arrangements that had broken down so utterly were, of course, furious, and planned condign punishment for the guilty hillmen; but these were vetoed by the Political authorities, who perhaps felt that, whatever the guilt of the men of Tyari, the blame{406} did not lie entirely with them! The camp at Mindan was reorganised and set going once more, and harassed authority set itself to consider what could be done with a problem difficult enough before, and now tangled worse than ever. One thing only was clear, that in any case it was hopeless to attempt anything till spring; and so refugees and British, each extremely cross with the other, settled down for the winter in camp at Mindan, with nothing settled but the extreme difficulty of a settlement!

Government fell back on a scheme of “settlement by infiltration,” or putting the people on the sites of villages that had “gone vacant” in time past, either through the war, or by virtue of the general decline of population during the later years of the Ottoman Empire. It was, of course, not the “enclave” that had once been planned for them and which they had been given the opportunity of securing, nor was it “their own country” for most of them, and they did not at all like the notion of being put where they could go, with Moslem neighbours and sometimes Moslem landlords.

Their behaviour towards these was not, it must be owned, altogether conciliatory. There were cases of villagers put under a particularly good landlord (and a

good Moslem gentleman *is* a gentleman), who accepted large advances from him on condition of promising to reap his crops at a certain wage-rate in harvest, and then (with true up-to-date spirit) struck for a large advance at the last moment! Even then the landlord was not anxious to take steps. It was, he said, a point of honour with him: he had never put any tenant, of any religion, in the law courts yet.

"Neither shall you now, Agha," said the local Political officer; "but the Government has its honour, too, and these fellows shall carry out a contract to which the Government was a party."

In another case, too, one had to admit that the Christians were asking for trouble. It is not neighbourly to kill a pig, cut him up, and put the *disjecta membra* of him in and about the only spring from which your Mussulman neighbours have to draw their water!{407}

Delay followed delay, it seeming to be the policy of the Government to keep those who were getting on one another's nerves tied together in idleness. Home authority said that it would give a "block grant" of £500,000 to settle the whole Assyrian problem, but would not allow those on the spot to get to work at the plan they had prepared, being apparently under the impression that when you are settling people "on the land" they can begin farming operations on it at any season. "I am willing to tackle Joshua's job," said a harassed official, "and try to settle these tribes in a promised land of sorts. Still, unlike Joshua, I cannot stop the sun, and the summer is advancing now!"

At last permission was received, and preparations commenced for the movement of the people, tribe by tribe, to villages on and about the northern border of Irak. The fact that the border was still undefined, and the only thing clear to everyone on the spot was that the line suggested by the unratified Treaty of Sèvres was unworkable, added yet another element of confusion to the problem. One person who was doing his efficient best to "queer the whole show"

was Petros Agha. When inquiry was made into the fiasco of November, 1920, that worthy had got off at least as cheaply as he deserved, being acquitted of anything worse than incompetence and gross mismanagement. There was nothing to show that he intended Tyari and Tkhuma to go off and raid as they did, when he assigned to them just that part of his line from which it was easiest to do so! Thus, he had not been put into prison with others, and was using his freedom to intrigue against any plan of settling his people which was not under his control.

His dream now (and how far the man believes in his own dreams is a problem beyond our solving) was of an "independent Assyria," a thin strip that should stretch between Turkish and Irak territory, from Urmi in Persia to Alexandretta on the Mediterranean, the whole to be under French protection! This he put forward at the moment when the French were deciding that even Cilicia was beyond their power to hold; and he perpetually urged all of his nation to have nothing to do with any British schemes for their{408} disposal, for was not he, Petros Agha, just coming back with boundless supplies of French rifles and French napoleons, to lead them back in triumph to their own land once more? That at least was the song sung by his agents in Mindan camp in his name, and no suggestion as to the desirability of shepherding the man out of the country met with any response. In particular, his influence was thrown against the most hopeful element in the Government scheme—viz., the reconstitution of the Assyrian contingent. The attempt to raise an Arab force in Mesopotamia was not looking too promising just then, and military men were proposing to collect afresh the force that they had so unfortunately thrown away before, and to use the best fighting element in Irak in the defence of the land. It was to be as numerous a force as the nation could raise, and to be officered by British officers.[181] Petros passed the word round (or his agents in camp did it for him), that

no man who regarded Petros as his leader must enlist, and Government would not allow those charged with recruiting for the force to stop this counter-Government propaganda! It says something for the possibilities of using this nationality in the one way it can be really of use, that under these circumstances some 600 men were enrolled. On the final removal of Petros (see below) this number went up at once to over 2,000. It was only British advice, given for the sake of the people, that fixed that limit.

However, the wheels continued to revolve, if slowly, and with a vast amount of creaking and of worry to political officers who had the work of settling some 10,000 recalcitrant people. This trifling job was thrown in as a sort of additional{409} faggot on the top of an already heavy load! Arrangements were come to with the Kurds of Berwar for the return of the Christians to that district, and to that of Ashitha beyond it, it being held that if that country was perhaps not strictly in Irak, at least it had never been efficiently in Turkey! The local Kurds, indeed, behaved quite unexpectedly well, seeming to regard the presence of their old Christian neighbours as a part of the established disorder of things, which had a sort of vested right to be restored. One was reminded of certain married couples who lead a "cat and dog life" in one another's society, but who yet both crave for the accustomed irritation if ever it is withdrawn! They recognised the right of the returning Christians to their old lands and villages, and even to a half of the crops that were in the ground, in places where the land was being cultivated by Kurds after the Christians had left it. Sometimes there were difficulties to settle, but surprisingly seldom.

In one case, some nomad Kurds who owed no allegiance to anybody had developed ambitions to try a more settled life, and had sat them down in a little group of villages known as the Halamun district, far away from anywhere. These fellows showed no eagerness to clear out and let the

lawful owners return. It took a visit from the assistant Political Officer and a long argument to put matters straight here, and matters at one time got so strained that the Kurds began debating whether it would not be better to kill the English intruder there and then. This matter was solved by the A.P.O. (who quite understood the matter under debate) coolly going to bed, and to sleep, in the midst of them, and so leaving them to talk the interesting problem over. When he woke up in the morning the Kurds were ready with a compromise. They would turn out of three of the four villages under debate, but wanted to retain one. This was agreed to. So matters went on. A pass through a seemingly impassable range is always found as you approach it. Caravan after caravan of tribesmen (each caravan perhaps 1,000 strong) was moved in turn from Mindan camp and up to the distributing centre at Dohuk, whence they could be forwarded, after considerable grumbling,{410} to the destination which was marked out for them. Every man, woman, and child received the Government grant of 120 rupees at Dohuk, and sometimes there were unforeseen claimants. One lady walked in triumphant with a baby that had not been there when she left Mindan two days before. She had simply gone aside from the caravan as it travelled, produced this infant, and then put it on the top of the bundle she was carrying, and so finished the day's journey! She wanted the Government to make the usual "capitation grant" to this new arrival. Strictly, he (or she) was not entitled to it, as not having been on the roll at the time of the departure from Mindan! Still, a point was stretched in this case.

The tribesmen were, of course, armed for self-defence, receiving a quota of rifles; and a very delicate business it was, in the light of recent events, to determine the proportion of guns that would enable them to defend themselves, and at the same time not tempt them to go a-raiding against their neighbours! This danger was a real

one, as may be seen from the request of one Tabriz, an Amazonian lady who had led her own retainers in person through all the fighting, and who now specially demanded two rifles for herself. "Why two, Tabriz?" "One to kill the Turkish Agha of Chal, and the other to kill the man who killed my brother, and who is now in your gendarmerie!"

In spite of such grateful flashes of humour the business was a weary one, hearing the same sort of grumbles from an endless succession of people over and over again, and trying to get them to see that, when they could not get what they would like, it was better to take what they could get! One thought with profound admiration of Moses. We had not 1 per cent of the mass of people whom he had to manage for forty years; and yet—so far as is recorded—he only lost his temper once, and then only hit out at the rock instead of his tormentors! Would that we could say as much.

Ultimately, the thing got done somehow, and the people put where, given honest work and fair luck, they had at least a chance of living. The writer, as a reward for his{411} small share in the work, found himself identified, not with Moses or Joshua, but with a much humbler Scriptural character. A flippant friend declared that he had always wanted to make the acquaintance of "that Egyptian" (Acts xxi. 38) "who made an uproar, and led out into the wilderness 4,000 men that were murderers," and now at last he had done so! The final stage of the work consisted in the settlement of the Patriarchal family in the "English Mission House" at Bibaydi (the property of the Archbishop of Canterbury), which was repaired and made ready for their reception. During the later stages of the *volks-wanderung*, they had remained rather in the background, seeming to acquiesce in a rather unfortunate manner in their own supersession by Petros Agha and his partisans. It was, therefore, a satisfaction to see them settled in a place where they could resume their proper work for their

people; and where the old loyalty has a chance of crystallising afresh, though perhaps in a new form, round the ancient ecclesiastical throne they represent. The ultimate removal of Petros Agha[182] from the land, and the arrangement of working understandings with the local Kurds, both help in the same direction, and the boy-patriarch shows signs (under the influence of his aunt and guardian) of developing on sound lines. Indications that the human boy in him is not entirely swamped by his office (the fact that the Patriarch has been known to snowball official callers suggests joyous visions of what might be at episcopal palaces in England) will probably be thought, at least by English folk, absolutely healthy symptoms!

The mountaineers were thus settled in a place where they could live, even if they had to fight famine, local diseases, and domestic foes, and their settlement provides a centre{412} to which scattered refugees may rally. With the Urmi sections, however, it is a different case. It was simply impossible for British authority to guarantee protection to these folk if they returned to their old home in Persia, and equally impossible for the Persian "Government" to protect them when there.

The only effective authority in the Urmi district is the ruffian Simco, and the feeling against the return of the expelled Christians is far more pronounced in Persia than in Kurdistan. In Kurdistan the war was simply a large instance of the feuds that had always been fought out in the land since time began. In Persia it was an unprecedented, and largely successful, rising of an inferior and subject race! This is a thing far harder to forgive. Thus, in Kurdistan the Kurds were ready to clear out of "Christian lands" that they had actually occupied and tilled; in Persia, the Mussulmans were ploughing the Assyrian village sites, and building houses on the vineyards, in their readiness to face any loss and labour, if only all trace of the Christians could be obliterated.

The British authorities declared that they could not repatriate men of Urmi. Every individual would receive a "capitation grant" similar to that given to others, and every family would be given lands, in Irak, if they would accept them. If they returned to Persia, it must be as individual Persian subjects at their own risk. It was a hard saying, but one does not see what else they could possibly say.

Even so, the drawing force of their own land was too strong to be resisted in many cases. "The earth that bore us lies lightest on our bones," and some thousands of Urmi people (there were some 10,000 of them in all) sought to return to their own land. Many settled in Mesopotamian towns, and found work there, but hardly any accepted the lands in Irak that the Government would give. Nothing is harder than helping folk! At first there were difficulties about the reception of even individuals at the frontier, but this was overcome, and several thousand returning refugees drifted to centres like Hamadan and Tabriz (where others{413} of their co-nationals had preceded them), there to wait and live as they could, till fate should open a way for them to return to their own. One must admit with deep regret that, for these people, the result of joining the Entente in the war has been the utter extinction of a community of Christians who trace back their life to the Magi who came to worship at the manger of Bethlehem. Even the life of their mountain brethren is not assured. If war, famine, and disease shall spare them, and if a British democracy that fought the war to secure the safety of small nations shall not make peace at the price of handing over a small allied nation to its avowed and bitter enemy, then it may, perhaps, be allowed the chance of doing what it desires to do, and of continuing to serve England in the only way in which it can render service. But that matter is not settled at the date of writing.

The Assyrian settlement then has been, like the Mesopotamian settlement of which it is a part—like the

whole Peace for that matter—a "botched job." A piece of work that might have been finely done has, in fact, been just patched up to go on somehow: because the Democracy that was going to make the world safe is too tired to finish its work; and because it was unwilling or unable to make up its mind as to what it wanted at all.

The spectacle is a pitiable one, only redeemed by the magnificent work done in Mesopotamia by the officers who now seem likely to meet the usual reward of those who serve the British Government well!

Turkey in 1918 was willing to accept absolutely any terms that Britain laid down, with thanks to Allah that they were not more severe. "We don't even care who governs us now," said a Turk of position to the writer (then a prisoner in Turkish hands in Anatolia). "No conceivable Government can be as bad as our own, and we only hope that the British will take us over." Then, because our "statesmen" did not know what they wanted, came delay, delay, delay: till the Turk could gather his forces again, and show himself, as usual, a good fighter, but uncivilised and uncivilisable; absolutely incapable of recognising that a *rayah* has or{414} can have rights, and equally incapable of seeing anything wrong in his habit of dealing with even the suspicion of "treason" by massacring every man and ravishing every woman! There may have been some excuse for maintaining him in Europe before the war, when to abolish him meant the outbreak of one. Now, after it, he has been maintained to be the seed of future trouble, by statesmen who proclaimed the "war to abolish war"; and on their heads rests the guilt of the future massacres that will surely arise after the gigantic lesson they have given to the world that massacres can be committed with impunity, if only they are big and horrible enough!

The war was "to make the world safe for Democracy." Has Democracy shown itself capable of dealing with the world? Its weaknesses are, first, that it cannot trust its

agents. No race on earth has such administrators as the British; and the writer, who has been privileged to live with some of them and see their working, only hopes some day to be able to tell the story of what he has seen, that England may have at least the chance of knowing what manner of men they are who serve her in despised Mesopotamia. Yet, because one man in a hundred may show himself no true sahib, and may fall under temptations that he has never been trained to bear, Democracy at home hampers the ninety-nine good men for that reason; and will not allow the man on the spot, who knows, to act on his own judgment in crises, without delaying reference to those who neither know nor can know.

Second, Democracy, as represented by its leaders at home, gives pledges lightly, and abandons them. “Its vows are lightly spoken; its faith is hard to bind.” In the East, decision and firmness come first. A governor who has these will always be respected, even if he be cruel as no Englishman can be. Let him be just as well, and he is worshipped. But how can he be firm and decisive when those at home will not let him act for himself, and send him ever-varying orders from Downing Street?

It is this conduct in the British Government; this failure, not in the men on the spot, but in those at home, that calls{415} out all the worst qualities in Turk and Arab, Armenian and Assyrian. Few people know better than the writer how annoying those latter types can be, but they can respect and serve a Government that knows its own mind. It is because of this evil spirit that we have ourselves evoked that some now clamour for the complete evacuation of Mesopotamia.

This is a claim to which in honour we cannot yield. Even apart from the guardianship that we have definitely accepted under treaty, we have contracted a moral obligation that it is impossible for us to disown. We did not make war on the inhabitants of Mesopotamia; we came to

free them from the domination of the Turk. Having so freed them, we cannot honourably leave them till fresh authority has arisen to control the disorderly elements that swarm in every quarter of that land. That was our pledge to those who have stood by us through good and ill.

We have cast out one unclean spirit; now, if we leave the house empty, seven other spirits more wicked than the Turk will enter in, and the last state of Mesopotamia will be worse than the first.

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GLOSSARY

Abba. An Arab cloak. See p. 9.

Agha. "Master." The title of a petty chieftain, chiefly in use among the Kurds.

Araba. A light carriage. See p. 6. The driver is an **Arabaji**.

Ashiret. "Feudatory." See p. 167.

Baita (or Bait). A living room (Syriac).

Beg (or Bey). Perhaps equivalent to "Honourable." A title given to Europeans as well as to local chiefs.

Belai. Perhaps equivalent to Belvedere. See p. 142.

Binbashi. Lit. the commander of 1000 men. A "Major" (Turkish), often written Bimbashi, for euphony.

Birader. "Brother" (Kurdish).

Cadi. "Judge" or "Magistrate."

Capitulations. The charters defining the privileges of foreign residents in Turkey. Originally granted by the Sultans of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and confirmed in their present form in 1870.

Chôl. The desert. See p. 61.

Dagh. "Mountain" (Turkish).

Deir. "Monastery" (Syriac).

Diwan. Lit. "Sofa" or "Däis"; hence an "Audience" or "Reception." **Diwan Khana**, "A Reception Room."

Effendi. "Sir." A title given especially to Europeans.

Fedai. An Armenian terrorist. See p. 245.

Firman. An Imperial rescript.

Franga. "Frank"; i.e. European.

Giaour. An "Infidel"; i.e. one who is not a Moslem.{418}

Haj. The obligatory pilgrimage to Mecca, which is incumbent upon all strict Moslems. **Haji**, one who has performed the pilgrimage. Shiahs go also on "Haj" to the tomb of Hossein at Kerbela.

Hakim. A physician.

Hamidié. The battalions of irregular soldiers embodied by Abdul Hamid II.

Hegira. The flight of Mohammed from Mecca in 622 A.D.

Imaum. Properly one who leads the Responses in the public services in the Mosques. A Moslem divine, learned in the **Sheriat** or Sacred Law.

Iyba. "Shame"; "Infra dig."

Jebel. "Mountain" (Arabic).

Jehad. A "Holy War," undertaken for the defence of Islam against unbelievers.

Kaimakam. A Turkish district governor of the third rank, inferior to a **Vali** and a **Mutaserif**. **Kaimakamlik**, the district governed by a **Kaimakam**.

Kala. "Castle."

Kalima. The Moslem Confession of Faith.

Katar. "Mule." **Katarji.** A "Muleteer."

Kavass. An armed attendant, usually attached to a foreign Consulate.

Keleg. A raft buoyed on inflated skins. See pp. 137 and 340. **Kelegji**, the man who works it.

Khan. An "Inn" (Turkish). **Khanji**, an "Inn-keeper."

Khan. "Chief" (Persian). A title of respect.

Malik. "Chief" (Syriac). Akin to **Melek**, "King." A title in use among the Mountain Syrians as about equivalent to **Agha** among the Kurds.

Mar. "Lord." Fem. **Mart.** (Syriac). A title given by the Syrians to the Saints and Bishops of their Church.

Mejidié. A Turkish silver coin of the value of twenty **piastres**. Equivalent at present rates to about 3s. 9d.

Millet. Any subject religious sect officially recognized as existing in the Ottoman Empire. See pp. 80 and 89.

Mira. "Ruler." A form of **Amir** or **Emir** (Arabic). A title

given to the Chief of the Yezidis, and to certain prominent Chiefs among the Kurds.{419}

Mohurram. The ten days' mourning observed by the Shiah Moslems in memory of Hassan and Hosein, the sons of Ali: particularly in memory of the latter, slain by his rival Yezid at Kerbela in 680.

Mollah. A Moslem priest.

Mudir. A Turkish local governor of the fourth and lowest rank; inferior to a **Vali**, a **Mutaserif**, and a **Kaimakam**.

Mutaserif. A Turkish provincial governor of the second rank; inferior to a **Vali.**

Piastre. A Turkish coin, worth about 2¼d.

Pshitta. The ancient Syriac version of the Holy Scriptures.

Qasha. A Christian priest (Syriac).

Rabban. Fem. **Rabbanta** (Syriac). A Christian who has adopted certain Monastic obligations. See pp. 113 and 270.

Rabbi. "Teacher" (Syriac). The title usually given by the Syrians to the members of the Archbishop's Assyrian Mission.

Rais. The head man of a village.

Ramazan. The great Moslem Fast, lasting one lunar month; during which time no food may be taken from sunrise to sunset.

Rayat. "Subject" or "Serf"; see p. 167.

Regie. An inter-national trading company, which rents the tobacco monopoly from the Ottoman Government.

Sam. The "Poison Wind" of the desert. See pp. 62 and 339.

Santon. A Moslem saint.

Serai. Strictly a "yard" or "quadrangle"; hence a house which is built around a quadrangle: often "Government House."

Seyyid. A descendant of the Prophet Mohammed.

Shamasha. A Christian deacon (Syriac).

Sheikh. Lit. "Elder." A title given especially to Moslem chiefs possessing high religious authority.

Sheriat. The "Sacred Law," as enunciated in the Koran.

Shiah. An important sect among the Moslems, dominant in Persia and India, who maintain that Ali, Mohammed's son-in-law, was his legitimate and hereditary successor, and who accordingly repudiate the authority of Ali's three predecessors in the Khalifate, Abu Bekr, Omar, and Othman.

Sufi. A Moslem mystic of somewhat pantheistic sympathies.

Sunni. The Orthodox Moslems, dominant in Turkey, who regard Abu Bekr, Omar, and Othman as being legitimate Khalifs and assign them precedence over Ali.{420}

Tashnak. The Armenian Revolutionary Society. See p. 245.

Tel. A prehistoric barrow or tumulus.

Vali. A Provincial Governor-General. A Turkish governor of the highest rank.

Vilayet. The province under the jurisdiction of a **Vali**.

Yezidi. See chap. iv, pp. 87-110.

Zaptieh. A policeman of the Turkish constabulary. See p. 47.

Ziaret. A Moslem place of pilgrimage; usually the tomb of a saint.

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MAP of EASTERN KURDISTAN with inset of mesopotamia



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FOOTNOTES:

[1] The direct journey across the desert occupies about ten days, and this is the route followed by the Government pack mules which carry the mails; but we diverged slightly to the northward in order to visit Urfa, Diarbekr, and Mardin.

[2] *Yaili* is really a Turkish word meaning "springy."

[3] Hierapolis, *alias* Bambyce, or Bembij, was sacred to

the worship of Astarte. Here one of the most notable remains is a great underground conduit, with deep circular inspection pits descending into it at frequent intervals. An American lady inspecting these pits observed artlessly that "now she understood where all those columns came from." Apparently she imagined that they had been extracted like so many corks!

[4] A *Khanji* keeps a *khan* (an inn), just as an *Arabaji* drives an *araba* (a carriage), or a *Katarji* a *katar* (a mule). The *ji* is simply a suffix meaning a worker.

[5] It may be said that the Government revenue is entirely derived from the land; and it is at least quaint to observe that the pet ideal of our own extremest Radicalism is at present actually realized (of all places in the world) in Turkey!

[6] An English cheque in Turkey will often pass from hand to hand like a banknote, and may be current for months before it reaches the bank. Indeed a cheque is more readily accepted than a banknote. It is more familiar to the money-changers. Also, if it gets purloined in the post, the loss is more easily recoverable.

[7] Weights and measures are in a similar state of chaos: *e.g.* each village has its own "stone" (a real material stone varying in size and weight *ad libitum*), and will sell its produce by no other standard.

[8] The bridge is now broken; but enough of it remains to reflect great credit on its builder, whether he was actually the Emperor Valerian or no.

[9] This church was the scene of one of the most fiendish incidents in the terrible Armenian massacres of 1895. Over two thousand refugees of all ages and both sexes had crowded into the sacred edifice to seek sanctuary from their pursuers. The Moslems thrust through the doors and windows fragments of broken furniture and carpets saturated with paraffin, and burnt or suffocated every soul.

[10] A legend attaches to these columns which should make a strong appeal to anyone with gambling instincts. One of the two is full of gold and silver; the other acts as stopper to a prodigious fountain of water which is capable

of producing another Noachian flood. He who pulls down the former will win wealth beyond the dreams of avarice; but if he touches the latter he will eliminate mankind. Which is which no one can tell, for the two are precisely similar, and consequently nobody hitherto has had courage to risk the attempt.

[11] There are many tombs and hermits' cells in the hill which faces the castle, similar to the combs and cells of Dara, which will be described in chap. iii. One of the tombs near the moat has a door formed of a great stone disc running in a groove and socket. Of this type in all probability was the tomb of our Lord.

[12] The inhabitants of Osroëne might be quite correctly described as "Greeks"; that word being often used in the New Testament as merely equivalent to "Gentiles."

[13] "They have continued Christian to this day," writes Eusebius; a statement which is not quite accurate, for Paganism was re-established later. Yet there were undoubtedly a large number of Christians in Edessa in Eusebius' day.

[14] Many of the Crusaders had married Asiatic wives, and the children of such ill-assorted marriages were generally a pretty poor lot. This fact contributed very sensibly to the fall of the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem.

[15] The true Ur of the Chaldees was either Erech or Tel Mugayir in Babylonia; but Haran, Abraham's later home, lay a considerable distance further north. Local traditions identify it with Harran (Carrhæ) about twenty-five miles south of Urfa, the proudest boast of whose inhabitants is the possession of Rebekah's Well. Other corroborative traditions assert that the Patriarch lost many cattle in fording the Euphrates near Birijik; and that the Arabic name of Aleppo (Haleb, "milk")was bestowed upon it in compliment to his pedigree cow. Jacob was certainly journeying northwards when he fled from Beersheba to Bethel; but this fact does not necessarily favour the Urfa tradition, for his direct line to Babylonia would cross an impassable desert. The Ibrahim of Urfa was perhaps some local hero who has got credited with his namesake's deeds.

It may be added that a further tradition asserts that Urfa was the home of Job.

[16] A multitude of basalt boulders covering quite a considerable area lie in the midst of the alluvial levels a little to the east of Nisibin. These are, of course, obviously volcanic, but it is not quite obvious how they get there: for Karaja and Nimrud, the nearest admitted craters, are each a hundred miles away.

[17] It is said that they were cleared away once; and that the inhabitants promptly replaced them, lest they should lose the fees that accrued to them for helping carriages along the road!

[18] The spacing of the towers also is just about the same as at Lugo and Astorga; but the irregular outline of the works is less usual, the Romans generally adopting a more formal plan.

[19] The walls of Constantinople had similar double banquettes. In this case the walls were double; and the two walls, taken together, must have made a stronger defence than the single wall at Amida. But neither of the two, taken separately, was quite so formidable in itself.

[20] The whole is built of basalt with yellow marble columns, and yellow marble bands here and there.

[21] The science of war has made little progress in these parts since the days of the Assyrians. To this day a Kurdish chieftain, when besieging his rival's castle, will endeavour to force an entry by mining the walls with picks.

[22] Zachariah of Mitylene.

[23] Chosroes employed the same device in his siege of Edessa a little later. In this case the mine was fired prematurely and (lest the smoke should betray them) the defenders pelted the mound with fireballs so that the Persians never suspected that the real danger was under ground. Presently the fire got beyond all quenching, and the mound was destroyed completely; the smoke of its burning being visible fifty miles away. Such counter-strokes were rather dangerous, as sometimes the wall itself burst with the heat of the bonfire; but the basalt walls of Amida were doubtless pretty well inured.

[24] Kobad's losses had amounted to 50,000, so there were plenty of *manes* to appease.

[25] We may quote a parallel incident which occurred in India soon after the Mutiny. An old cultivator was being examined as witness with regard to the outbreak in his town. He had heard a great row, he explained, but at first he took no notice. He thought it was "only the Rajah plundering the bazaar." But soon the riot came nearer, and he could distinguish the shouts of "Allah." And at that word he grew frightened. It must mean real mischief when the mob invoked the name of God!

[26] See pp. 227, 338. Bedr Khan Beg's massacres of the mountain Christians occurred in 1843, and are described by Layard in his "Nineveh and its Remains." Under pressure from the British Ambassador, Bedr Khan and his family were eventually banished to Candia—"a totally inadequate punishment."

[27] Or rather, he has now written the Code Napoleon side by side with this system, and left authority to take its choice between the two, and to apply the code that is least trouble in each case!

[28] The Kurds are a very ancient people, no doubt identical with the "Carduchi" who gave so much trouble to the Ten Thousand in the Anabasis. Their modern Russian name "Kurdischi" is a transliteration of the Greek.

[29] These oppressed nationalities cherish pathetically futile hopes of British intervention, recognizing rightly that England is the only disinterested power. But the only power ever likely to interfere effectively is Russia; and though those who have tried Russian rule have found themselves bitterly disillusioned, it must be admitted that the Russians preserve better order than the Turks. What the country needs is a set of self-sacrificing administrators, with no axe of their own to grind, who will devote themselves solely to the good of the people. No other nation can furnish such administrators as England: and no other nation so obstinately refuses to recognize their worth.

[30] These monasteries have been visited and described by the Rev. O. H. Parry and Miss G. Lothian Bell.

[31] *i.e.* “Believers in one nature”; the name was given them because they rejected the technical term enforced at Chalcedon, which declared that Christ existed “*in two natures*,” the Divine and the Human.

[32] It is a remarkable proof of the persistency of Eastern conditions that, up to the commencement of the present century, 1 piastre (2*d.*) was still regarded as the regular day’s wage.

[33] The Chronicler also alludes to the baths as a monument fit to rank even with the granary and the cistern; but the limited time at our disposal did not allow us to identify these. The bridge and the river embankments are, however, conspicuous works.

[34] The establishment of this hermit monastery must have followed immediately upon the building of the city: for it is written that in 526 the Queen of King Kobad, being possessed by a demon, and having sought relief in vain from her own magicians, sorcerers, and soothsayers (who only succeeded in “introducing more demons into her”) came hither to consult a certain holy hermit named Moses, and was duly healed by his prayers. Kobad was, of course, officially a Zoroastrian (and privately, of all incredible things, a Communist); but even to this day the mountain Moslems not infrequently go on pilgrimage to Christian shrines.

[35] Justinian, it may be noted, had equipped this army with such a plethora of commanders that their defeat can hardly cause surprise.

[36] The snowfall on this occasion was even more prodigious in the mountains. The valley of Amadia was buried under an *average* depth of fourteen feet, and not a man could stir beyond his own village for a period of fully four weeks! Fortunately the villagers had their winter stock of provisions and fuel, and so did not suffer like the nomads; but the hares and partridges were exterminated, and have only just begun to reappear.

[37] The driving belt also formed part of the loot, and this was a good, useful bit of leather; so the game was generally voted quite worth the candle after all.

[38] See p. 81 for an explanation of these terms.

[39] The terms are not technically correct, but are used for clearness' sake.

[39a] The terms are not technically correct, but are used for clearness' sake.

[40] Jonah is still a great personage in the district. The Fast which he is said to have instituted, now known as the "Rogation of the Ninevites," is still observed annually by the members of all religious denominations—an extraordinary survival even in this extraordinary land.

[41] Thus they are even charged with human sacrifices; and it is said that, when a Yezidi falls ill, his relatives seek to propitiate the Power of Evil in his favour by murdering a Christian or Kurd. The charge is widely believed, but quite unsupported. It reminds one of the old accusation of ritual murder which was so often brought against the Jews in mediæval Europe; and which, by the way, is still devoutly believed by the Syrians—"Surely you would not eat Jews' bread, Rabbi? How can you be sure it is not made with the blood of a Christian child?"

[42] This is really the same word as Amir. The title is also given occasionally to some of the local Kurdish chiefs.

[43] Mascot means simply a temple, and is used by the Yezidis for mosques and churches as well as for their own shrine. Etymologically it is no doubt identical with *masjid*, *mezquita*, mosque.

[44] When approaching a village by night it is considered correct to give warning, either by sending a messenger ahead, or by firing a gun as one draws near, so that the villagers may be prepared for visitors. Otherwise it is not at all improbable that the intruders may be saluted with a fusillade!

[45] The Yezidis all agree that their temple was built by Christian workmen, and the monks at Rabban Hormizd even went so far as to say that it was once a Christian church. The former statement is possibly true; but the latter highly improbable. Sheikh Adi must have been a holy place long before the days either of Christians or Yezidis;

and that Christian monks may have occupied it for a time in the days of the Roman Empire is about the utmost that we can reasonably concede.

[46] A hatchet forms part of the Mira's insignia when he is fully arrayed for performing religious rites; and a comb has also certain magic properties, as instanced on p. 306.

[47] The Christians always remove their shoes in their churches, in addition to uncovering their heads.

[48] Another chamber, now used as an oil store for the temple lamps, opens out of the sanctuary to the westward. It is conceivable that this may have been the original nave, following the true lines of Orientation; and that the naves on the south side were added subsequently when larger accommodation was required.

[49] The Yezidis are so careful on this point that they even avoid words which are at all similar in sound to Sheitan, such as *shat* an arrow and *keitan* a thread.

[50] *i.e.* "Standards."

[51] They also act medicinally; the water in which they are washed being a great specific against every kind of disease.

[52] When Mrs. Badger visited Sheikh Adi the priest showed her an image which they said was that of *Melek Taüs*. But this was almost certainly a bronze lamp in the form of a bird, which they produced to appease her importunity. We are informed, however, that a later visitor has actually seen and photographed one of the *sanjaks*.

[53] These practices, of course, did not originate in the Mosaic ritual, and the Yezidis may possibly have borrowed them direct from a yet older source.

[54] This owes its name to the fact of its having contained the word, Sheitan—now in every instance carefully erased.

[55] It is possible that the Yezidis themselves at one time encouraged this misconception; for, so long as the Ommayedes were on the throne, Yezid's name may have helped to gain them toleration.

[56] In this legend we meet with the only official

explanation to account for *Melek Taüs* being represented as a peacock. When the Marys came to the empty tomb and found no body within it, *Melek Taüs* (says the legend) appeared to them as a Dervish and related what he had done. To rebuke their doubts, he took a cock which had been killed, cooked, and dismembered, and restored it to life in their sight. He then vanished; first informing them that henceforth he would choose to be worshipped in the form of the most beautiful of birds. The representation of Deities under the form of birds was familiar to the ancient Babylonians.

[57] The duty of hospitality is incumbent upon all Eastern monasteries; and often where the monastery has become extinct this duty has passed to the present tenants of its lands.

[58] From the days of "the Great Elchi" onward the English Ambassadors have interfered occasionally, and with some success, in favour of the persecuted Yezidis; and this fact explains their gratitude towards the English race.

[59] "Divine right" is an axiom in the East; and the Khalifate soon became hereditary, though at first it was endeavoured to make it elective. To this day at Constantinople, though a Sultan may be deposed or murdered, it is always a member of the House of Othman who is appointed in his room.

[60] Not the same nephew that we had met at Sheikh Adi.

[61] This was really rather a bit of cheek. It would be thought presumptuous even in a Kurd.

[62] A coarse local kind of Anise

[63] See, for instance, the head on the title-page—a portrait of a Syrian priest, the late Qasha Khoshaba, who might have been a reincarnation of Sargon.

[64] These caps are precisely of the shape which we see on Assyrian bas-reliefs.

[65] A clean-shaven man in the East is regarded as something emasculate, and in order to escape reproach one must wear at least a moustache. Laymen often shave the

beard and whiskers, but a bishop or priest never shaves; and to shave a priest is esteemed as practically equivalent to unfrocking him.

[66] Gibbon takes the "six-score thousand persons who could not discern between their right hand and their left" as referring only to the children, and thus calculates the total population of Nineveh at 700,000 souls. Taking a line from Mosul we might estimate that about 150,000 could actually be housed within the walls.

[67] Chosroës had sent him forth with the significant instruction: "If you cannot conquer, you can die."

[68] On the same ground in 750 was fought the great battle which transferred the Khalifate from the dynasty of the Omayyades to the Abbassides. There can be few spots on the earth's surface which have seen three such decisive days.

[69] One of these marshy valleys is known locally as the Dungeon of Solomon, that potent necromancer having here imprisoned the rebellious Jann, by pegging them into the mud.

[70] The monastery of Sheikh Mattai, perched high up on the southern slopes of Jebel Maklub, is very similar to Rabban Hormizd in general situation, but consists of buildings, not of caves.

[71] Of course he was: though physically (and we hope morally) the accuracy of the description was not so striking as might be wished.

[72] A strong chain is advisable; for in one of the Tkhuma churches a lunatic who had been similarly tethered succeeded in wrenching the staple from the wall. The old priest entering next morning discovered him squatting on the altar, having torn up all the service books, and set the hangings on fire! He was further anxious to strangle the priest, who only just eluded him. Evidently this was a case of possession by Apollyon himself.

[73] The nearest village to these sculptures is Hinnis, upon the right bank of the river at the point where our road struck it; but they take their name from the larger village of Bavian, situated on the left bank a little lower down.

[74] There are several remains of reservoirs also, built on the southern side of the mountains by the Assyrians, and on the northern by the Urartians. In one instance (at Firek Gol, near Van) even the dam is still intact, but is no longer watertight.

[75] Abdul Hamid, for all his shortcomings, was apparently a pretty good landlord. Khalilka had to pay to him only one-third of its rice crop and one-fifth of its other produce; which is a considerably smaller proportion than local custom would justify.

[76] These trees are often "sacred trees," from which no one will dare to take fuel. For there are still "sacred trees" in this country—as there were in the days when the bas-reliefs of Nineveh were carved.

[77] The *malmudir* of Akra supervises the taxation of about 150 villages, and about £10,000 in taxes pass annually through his hands. His salary is about £120, while that of a *kaimakam* is £500 to £800, according to the importance of his district. These are not exactly princely (even when they are paid regularly), but it is, of course, possible to increase them by well-recognized, if not quite legitimate, means.

[78] We spent the night in equally brotherly fashion, our beds being spread out for us side by side on the floor of the room. Our host even wished us to take turn and turn about with the hubble-bubble with which he solaced his last waking moments; but we pleaded that this was a taste which we had not acquired.

[79] The prevalent opinion in Mosul was that the Tripoli, where the war was raging, was the Asiatic Tripoli. The comet which was visible about this time presaged destruction to the Italians, "because you will observe that the tail points towards Italy"—the aforesaid comet standing vertically in the north-eastern quarter of the sky.

[80] Tuesday, it may be added, is esteemed inauspicious by Christians, because on that day Judas Iscariot made his covenant with the chief priests. Wednesday is the Yezidi Sabbath; but apparently anyone may work on Thursday. Thursday will probably be early closing day when reform

is inaugurated in the land.

[81] The Imaum is virtually a sort of parish clerk, leading the Responses in the public services at the mosque; and our friend was as gravely self-important as any English parish clerk could be.

[82] The Sheikh tried to purchase peace honestly; but his enemies outraged even local morality by accepting his bribes, and persisting in their machinations.

[83] They were mostly half-trained Kurdish levies, who were not quite easy in their consciences at fighting such a Holy Man as the Sheikh, and had moreover a pretty shrewd suspicion that they were being employed in Sabonji's interests and not the *Hukumet's*. The Sheikh used merely to disarm his prisoners, and then release them on parole. As he had nowhere to keep them, his only alternative would have been to kill them; and this would have meant a war of extermination, which he did not wish to provoke.

[84] This was Nazim Pasha, then Vali of Baghdad, who was subsequently Commander-in-Chief of the Ottoman army in the Balkan War, and was assassinated by the partisans of Enver Bey during the negotiations for peace. He so entirely exonerated the Sheikh as to award him £1000 indemnity—on paper: but the Sheikh had suffered heavily from the plunder of his villages, and gained nothing but prestige.

[85] The correct title to use in addressing the Sheikh is "*Corban*"—"Your Holiness."

[86] The regular oath of a Tyari Christian is: "By the head of Mar Shimun."

[87] A "*belai*" forms the top story of many of the mountain houses. It is quite open on one side (usually the northern) and forms the general family living room during the summer heats. In winter it is used as a hay barn, and thus helps to warm the room below.

[88] Except one hoof, to be accurate—such at least was the cook's report. Scott points out that the Scotch highlanders also would eat prodigious meals when they got the chance, though ordinarily their fare was very meagre.

[89] Eye disease is terribly prevalent in all the neighbouring provinces. It is originated by dust and want of cleanliness, and aggravated by persistent neglect.

[90] In this connexion sometimes the phrase is unpleasantly literal. The prison at Akra, for instance, is a regular bottle-shaped dungeon like those at Alnwick and Berkeley, and in many Continental keeps.

[91] See p. 112.

[92] It is to be feared that sometimes they adopt other masculine habiliments, particularly (for instance) in winter, for convenience in getting through deep snow. We went once to rout up a workman who had failed to turn up at his job in the morning. He was still in bed, we discovered. A fact which did not tend to appease us until he faltered out his excuse. “But my wife has gone away to work, Rabbi; and has taken my only pair of trousers”—when we fear that the Rabbi’s laughter brought these confidences to a sudden end.

[93] This brushwood harbours all sorts of vermin, including scorpions and serpents, which latter are rather encouraged because they are reputed to eat the rest. The proper way to get rid of them is to make up a blazing fire, and pile on to it a quantity of sheep’s horns or goats’ horns (cow’s horns will not do). This sounds as if it ought to get rid of much worse things than serpents!

[94] The *tanura* serves also as an oven, and when the fire has subsided into embers the thin pancakes of dough (the form in which bread is usually made in the mountains) are plastered round the hot sides of the pit.

[95] Most “old books” have now been ferreted out, and perhaps the only earths yet untried are in the Yezidi villages of the Sinjar. These villages were formerly Christian; and there is a widespread conviction (strenuously denied by the Yezidis) that old Christian books still remain there, carefully secreted in certain caves. We have heard from a Syrian priest that he himself once actually saw some spread out to dry in the sun because they had got damp in a flood. He was at once headed off when he tried to look at them; but could see from the title-

page that one was "The Works of Diodorus," a famous Eastern doctor whose writings have been entirely lost.

[96] This journey was actually made in the spring of 1909, and was thus earlier in date than the events recorded in the last chapter.

[97] Alternatively *mesta*—curds; the usual form of dairy produce hereabouts—identical with Jael's "Butter in a lordly dish."

[98] Turkey has since evacuated the disputed province.

[99] See "Highlands of Asiatic Turkey," by Lord Percy. The victim was Mar Gabriel of Urmi.

[100] See the writings of Æneas Sylvius Piccolomini, quoted by Milman, "Latin Christianity," XIII, xvi. The Italian, however, entirely misunderstood the chivalrous practice.

[101] The Prophet himself never left Arabia; and even Omar—a favourite legendary hero in these parts—never came north of Jerusalem.

[102] The life of a minor official in Turkey is not a happy one. We have recently heard of the experience of a tax-collector in this seventh year of upright and constitutional government, who undertook the adventurous job of gathering the taxes from Tkhuma and Tyari, (!) at a wage of £3 per month. After two months' work he asked for an instalment of his salary. "My dear fellow, you shall have it all," said the *Mal-mudir*; "there are no more arrears in these days; you take all your salary—subject to the official deductions, of course." Accordingly he presented the applicant with a schedule of these "deductions" (which amounted to £5 10s. 9d. out of the total of £6), and the balance of 9s. 3d. in silver!

[103] From "Turkey in Europe" by "Odysseus"

[104] These truculent ruffians (when they have thoroughly earned a thrashing) will often accept it with most edifying docility. We have heard the late Dr. Browne, an old gentleman of the mildest manners and most fragile appearance, lamenting with the utmost artlessness that he had been obliged to thrash his muleteers. Consuls do not

approve the habit, but have been known to practise it nevertheless.

[105] There is some real danger in exploring these caverns, for if you do not often find real *Jann*, you are always liable to stumble on a wolf!

We were once exploring a "cave-monastery," near Maragha; one feature of which was a long passage, burrowing into the rock, and expanding at intervals into cells, like balls threaded on a string.

Down this we crawled, with an antiquarian's eagerness, our guide politely allowing us to go first. When we were well in, a voice came from behind us: "*Rabbi*, there's a wolf who generally lives down here, but I don't know if he's in now!"

[106] *I.e.* by Kurds driving cattle into the building. This outrage is exceptional, but not unknown.

[107] Orientals usually attribute the Epistle to the Hebrews to St. Paul.

[108] We fear that other episodes in the career of this polite brigand are of a far darker hue. He was at least concerned in the murder of an American Missionary—the Rev. Benjamin Labaree—in 1905.

[109] Tea is considered a great luxury, and men of moderate means will actually ruin themselves by indulging in it. Not so much owing to the cost of tea as to that of the sugar, for they use about as much sugar as the tea will dissolve.

[110] Owing to Russian influence, this statement now needs some qualification as far as Urmi is concerned.

[111] It is a double church really: Mar Sergius and Mar Bacchus: these very popular saints in the East, among whose churches that at Constantinople is the most famous, were Persian martyrs of the fifth century; and the church of Mar Sergius near Urmi claims to mark the site of their martyrdom.

[112] The word has been adopted into English, as a relic, probably, of Crimean slang; and the "Ancient Society of Codgers" may claim khoja Nazr-ed-din as a member of

their club. Literally, it means “eunuch” or “tutor”; but in common speech implies rather “old fellow.”

[113] Persian women have a high reputation for cleverness; a repute which is exemplified in the saying that every Moslem, to be happy, requires at least four wives. A Persian because of her wit, and a Circassian because of her beauty; an Armenian to do the cookery and housework, and a Kurdish woman to thrash, as a wholesome example to the other three.

[114] At the present price of silver about 3*s.* 6*d.*

[115] Heir-Apparent of Persia; Azerbaijan is his hereditary province.

[116] This was the Rev. Benjamin Labaree, of the American Presbyterian Mission, Urmi, who was murdered by the *Seyyid* Nur-ed-din, on account of some personal grudge that he had (or fancied he had) against another member of that mission. The *Seyyid* was little better than a madman; though, of course, not the less of a holy man or of a dangerous scoundrel on that account. It appears (though there is not absolute certainty in the matter) that Mr. Labaree was offered life if he would renounce Christianity by repeating “the *kalima*,” and died as a martyr on his refusal.

[117] Even Bibles used to reach their destination with the word Armenia neatly obliterated; but we feel there was some excuse for the censor who confiscated a batch of hymn books on the ground that “Onward Christian Soldiers” was a sort of Armenian *Marseillaise*!

[118] *i.e.* Governor. The rank is intermediate between *kaimakam* and *vali*.

[119] “I’ll tell you what it is,” cried an irritated British Consul to an Armenian petitioner, “if ever we did undertake the administration of your country, you fellows would have to pay your taxes.” “What!” exclaimed that gentleman in dismay, “*every year?*”

[120] The criminals who were not sentenced must have been far more numerous. The *Vali* must have felt like the old Lord of Perugia, who had to grant a general amnesty lest he should depopulate the town!

[121] The word "*Fedai*" is Persian, and comes from a root that means sacrifice, and implies "one who sacrifices himself for a cause." Thus a volunteer in a forlorn hope would be a *Fedai*; and the term was originally applied to the devoted Assassins of the "Old Man of the Mountain" in crusading days. Ottomans usually called the revolutionaries simply "brigands." A third society, the *Huntchak*, was worked on the same lines as the *Tashnak*, and was incorporated with it later.

[122] *Tashnak* means a banner.

[123] Some were found in the writer's own residence; a Tashnakist having taken service with him for the express purpose of securing a good *cache!* The soldiers were hugely delighted with their haul, and gave us some packets of dynamite as mementoes!

[124] Otherwise "Bashi-bazouks." This word of formidable memory means merely "rotten-heads," and is barrack slang for a civilian mob.

[125] It may be a novelty to some readers to hear that all varieties of Christianity, as well as of Islam, are established and endowed by the State in Turkey. Bishops are appointed by the State and are State paid in part; and church organizations are recognized, given power, and controlled as such. The fallacious assumption implied in the query, "*quid Christianis cum regibus?*" does not deceive the Oriental as easily as it appears to do the Western.

[126] See the Preface.

[127] Until quite lately his Beatitude maintained a court jester also—one Shlimun (Solomon), who died a few years ago. He was an amusing scamp, but his sense of humour was sometimes rather *outré*.

[128] The priest has been known to stop in the middle of service, and ask her where he is to go on; for they are simple folk, and the Use is very complex.

[129] See Benson, "Cyprian," pp. 51-57. The scandals there referred to, however, are quite absent from the modern Nestorian Church.

[130] This advice applies even more forcibly to travellers in the remoter villages. There almost the only food obtainable is the local pancake bread. The sole delicacies are "butter (*i.e.* curds) and honey," as they were in the days of Isaiah. Eggs may be got occasionally; but the pampered European who lusts for flesh meat had better bring it with him in tins. Life is too hard in the mountains to yield more than the barest necessaries; and the slaughter of a sheep for a banquet is a very exceptional extravagance indeed.

[131] The churches serve as refuges for the women and children whenever the villages are raided, and are thus built with an eye to security. Often they are planted in almost impregnable sites, like the little church of Shwawutha in our illustration.

[132] Attached to the church are a couple of anchorites' cells, and within the last twenty-five years one of these was actually inhabited by a venerable hermit—the *rabban* Yonan. The incumbent is entitled to reside there still—if he likes.

[133] See additional note, p. 283.

[134] Fasting as a religious observance is most strictly enforced among the Syrians. We have known a priest refuse to proceed with a marriage service (which, of course, is ranked as a Sacrament) because he discovered that the best man had been smoking that morning! It was only after thrashing the delinquent that he relented and finished the service.

Smoking breaks a fast. And this fact was exemplified in a ludicrous sequel to an ugly attack on an Englishman which occurred in these parts in 1912. The Englishman had evaded his assailants, and found shelter for the night in a village: but it was quite likely he would be pursued; and at daybreak next morning every one's nerves were very much on edge. The sun's rays had just touched the hill-top opposite, and the shadows were rapidly sinking into the valley, when over the ridge, running as hard as he could leg it, there swooped a solitary Kurd. None could doubt the nature of his tidings; and they watched with their hearts in their mouths as he tore down the slope towards them, leapt

the stream, flung himself on the grass beside it, and—*lit a cigarette*.

It was *Ramazan*: and he only wished to reach a spot where the sun had not yet risen, in order to enjoy a last smoke!

[135] Tyari men would not have eaten her at all; not for that reason, but because they have scruples about touching beef. "Our Fathers did not do so."

[136] The Baz men are hereditary builders, and migrate in a body to Mosul in winter in order to undertake such work.

[137] *i.e.* "Prophet."

[138] A comb is one of the mystic symbols which are carved on the Yezidi temple at Sheikh Adi.

[139] See note at end of chapter.

[140] See Tylor, "Anthropology," ch. xvi.

[141] Reshid's personal reputation may be gleaned from the fact that natives travelling in our company have begged us to pocket their cash for them while passing through his borders. Even our inviolable "shadow" was not quite good enough there!

[142] *Châl* in Turkish means Thieve!—habitually, and preferably with violence. But this, though admirably apposite, is not an accredited derivation.

[143] The writer was recounting this anecdote at a meeting after his return to England when an old gentleman in the audience was overheard to remark, in a scandalized voice: "Tut, tut, tut; why didn't he give him in charge?"

[144] There are no coroner's inquests in the mountains; but we never killed any one as far as we know.

[145] "Books of remedies" and collections of charms like the one referred to are often found among the Nestorians, and the substance of them is often of almost incredible antiquity. The writer once translated some specimens he had selected to a friend learned in Assyriology and found that they were essentially identical with the charms on the oldest of the Babylonian tablets. A substratum of the oldest faith of the land has survived all the changes of seven thousand years.

[146] The incident occurred in 1901 or 1902. The officer concerned was Captain Maunsell, R.A., then British Vice-Consul at Van. The English "Apostles" do not usually carry arms. It might answer if they could be sure of disabling an assailant; for then he would come to be doctored, and amicable relations would be re-established. But to kill him would start a blood feud, and to miss him would be worst of all. The *vacuus viator* is safer than one who carries such a valuable prize as an English gun.

[147] The lady is usually allowed very little choice. We were consulted once in a knotty case where a girl had been betrothed to one man by her father and another by her mother; and we mildly suggested that she might at least be allowed a casting vote. "What can it matter to her, Rabbi?" said the Bishop of Berwar who was acting as arbitrator; "one husband is as good as another!"

[148] "And satyrs shall dance there" is the final touch in Isaiah's picture of the desolation of Babylon. This is doubtless the identical beast.

[149] He entirely confirmed Mr. Bram Stoker's evidence that the King of the Vampires is Dracula.

[150] Armenians aver that this happened on the summit of Sipan Dagh, near Van. Noah, on feeling the bump, ejaculated "*Sipan Allah!*" (Praise God!) and this gave its name to the mountain. He must have been the only mariner on record to feel delight at such an event.

[151] These were the gorges that drove Xenophon to take to the mountains in the Anabasis. He could march up the left bank of the river about as high as Jezireh; but there the ravine grew too narrow and difficult for troops.

[152] Herodotus seems to have confused the *keleg* and the *ghufa* in his notes; for both existed, on the evidence of the sculptures, in his day. He speaks of "circular craft, covered with skins and caulked with bitumen," and made on wooden frames. He adds that at the journey's end the wood was sold, and the skins carried back "to Armenia" on the back of a donkey that had made the voyage down on the vessel. All his details are right, as regards one or other of the two types, save only the voyaging donkey. An

experienced jackass will jump readily into a *ghufa* and be ferried across, or some way down, the river; but he does not, in these days at any rate, come all the way down from Diarbekr to Baghdad. However, there is no reason why he should not.

[153] Under these was in each case a small chamber, just large enough to contain the miniature image of the "guardian of the threshold" that was invariably placed there.

[154] See p. 191.

[155] This is not precisely the epithet that is usually applied to Nineveh in Scripture; but a touch of national prejudice changes the point of view. The Assyrian Tyrtæus was a refugee from Serai, near Van.

[156] See pp. 311 *et seq.*

[157] See p. 317.

[158] See pp. 76-78, 251, etc.

[159] See pp. 136 *et seq.*

[160] See pp. 171-73.

[161] The *Yaila* of Shina lies amid the mountains which are shown in the illustration facing p. 176. It would be near the extreme left of the picture, facing the precipices of Ghara Dagh.

[162] The Tal gorge debouches upon the Zab from the left, near the further end of the reach shown in the frontispiece. See also p. 288.

[163] This must have been a col in the distant mountain range, shown in the illustration facing p. 257.

[164] See pp. 127, 159, etc.

[165] See p. 216.

[166] The Kitab ul Fakhri on the Tartar sack of Baghdad.

[167] See pp. 256-69. Firebrand as he was, Aram on this occasion did all he could to avert disorder, exhorting the Armenians to suffer anything rather than give a pretext for "repression."

[168] The delay was partly owing to the "Sykes-Picot Treaty" which left Mosul in the French sphere. The French

could not work this treaty, and for long would not consent to its abrogation, and the fact tied British hands.

[169] A quaint episode marked the campaign. After storming—and plundering—a Kurdish village, some exultant mountain warriors came to their C.O. to announce that they had secured the most valuable loot they could hope to win. They presented to the amused officer an enormous MS. tome of Church services! It was a copy of their "Khudra"—*i.e.*, the collection of the variable parts of the offices on all Sundays and ferials of the "circle" (khudra) of the year, an enormously enlarged equivalent to the Collects and occasional prayers of the Book of Common Prayer. They begged for a mule from the transport train to carry this sacred trophy at the head of the column on the march, and it gives some idea of the size of the book when we say that the mule was actually necessary to carry it, though, as the companion volume of the "Gezza" (Treasury, containing the prayers for saints' days) was not there, it was not more than half a load for the beast. For the rest of the campaign the book was the palladium and standard of the corps, and was given a voluntary guard of honour every night. Subsequently, it was presented to the Patriarch, and is now in use in his church.

[170] Pp. 321 *et seq.*

[171] The Ottoman Government had, during the war, some notion of hanging the writer "because he had built a house to serve as a British fort." He escaped by a clerical error, heartlessly described by Sir A. Wilson as "one of those errors of routine inevitable in even the best administrations!" His name, in the list of civil prisoners, was transliterated one way; on the list of criminals, in another. We hope that this posthumous justification of the sentence is as satisfactory to the judges as it is to the criminal!

[172] See p. 118.

[173] "Sandy McPherson," said Lord Justice Braxton to the "panel" before him, "ye are a vera ingenious chiel, but ye'll be nane the waur of a haanging." And one is

reminded of this verdict by the character of that sporting and alluring rascal, Agha Petros. The man is a good fighter, who under other circumstances might have earned high rank; but whose lot has been cast in places that have developed that "kink" in his nature that will prevent him from ever being chevalier of a higher order than that of "Industrie." He declared to the writer—with a frankness that does him credit—that he had read the earlier edition of this book, and that all said of him therein (see pp. 218-19) was true; but he added that he had become a changed man since.

It is certainly the fact that this hawk has since learned to fly at higher game, but he still must be classified among "raptores." Alas that so many good fellows are rascals!

[174] See note on p. 401.

[175] When the Assyrians made their attack, an officer in the train judged it better to get out on the side remote from the action, "lest he should see things that it might be his duty to report."

[176] See p. 267.

[177] Surma *Khanim* spent several months, in the years 1919-20, in England, where she was the guest of the "Sisters of Bethany," who have an interest in her people of long standing. The object of her visit was to put the claims and position of her people before the British Home Authorities, and, if possible, before those of Europe at large. She at least secured a courteous hearing from British Cabinet Ministers, and though she was unable to extract any definite promises from men who did not themselves know what they wanted, she left the impression of a very striking personality on the minds of those who had been accustomed to think of Assyrians as a mere barbarian nuisance.

[178] See illustration facing p. 128.

[179] See pp. 311 *et seq.* Reshid had been "reconciled" the previous autumn; his formidable "Castle" at Deir Sherish being razed so flat that (as reported by the gleeful Assyrians) "You wouldn't think it had ever been there!"

[180] Some of the heroes of this Odyssey retired into

Mosul Gaol for a while in consequence of it, and were still there at the following Easter. Then a pitiful petition was sent in on their behalf (or, at least, on behalf of the "Old Churchmen" among them) to the effect: "Please let those out for Easter who have been keeping their fast so properly in prison. Never mind about the Protestants—*they* have been eating the good prison food and don't matter."

Unfortunately, even this pathetic plea did not move the Gallio who then sat in the seat of authority! However, all were released soon after.

Gaol has become, as a result of British rule, quite unpopular in Mosul. You can no longer sit in the prison and take your ease there, sending out for your food and tobacco, as under the Turk. Instead, you have to wear "an unbecoming frock" like the gentleman in the Bab ballads, and work on the roads. So "wearing the cap" is disliked in Mosul, the more as it is no longer possible, when weary of captivity, to hire a substitute to take your place there and make up the tale of captives!

[181] It was proposed to raise some companies of Yezidis for the levy also, and they would serve British officers most loyally. However, up to the time of writing this has not been done, though they offer good military material, and their home in Jebel Sinjar lies conveniently on the flank of the one line of advance possible to the one enemy. The only difficulty (given separate companies of Yezidis, as of Assyrians) seems to lie in the British words of command used throughout the "Mosul levy," and which Orientals who know no English pick up with marvellous quickness. For any sound resembling "Sheitan" is blasphemy to the ears of a Yezidi. How then is it possible to address to them the mystic adjuration "'Shun"?

[182] Petros was ill-advised enough to try and blackmail the High Commissioner! He claimed present payment of Rs. 38,000, alleged to have been spent by him out of his own funds on the expedition to Gawar! Failing immediate payment of this, he would denounce Sir P. Cox's dealings with his people to the League of Nations, the French Republic, and the Pope. To his amazement he was told that he might go to all three, and the devil as well if he liked

(the connection with the Pope was not so obvious to Petros as to the angry A.D.C.), and had better begin by leaving the office.

Typographical errors corrected by the etext transcriber:

Selencia=> Seleucia {pg 5}

admittted=> admitted {pg 100}

bridgroom=> bridegroom {pg 161}

left a one=> left alone {pg 178}

France or Amercia=> France or America {pg 259}

inacessible=> inaccessible {pg 264}

callousnesss=> callousness {pg 378}

faily well=> fairly well {pg 287}

is a good as ever=> is as good as ever {pg 291}

mattter=> matter {pg 301}

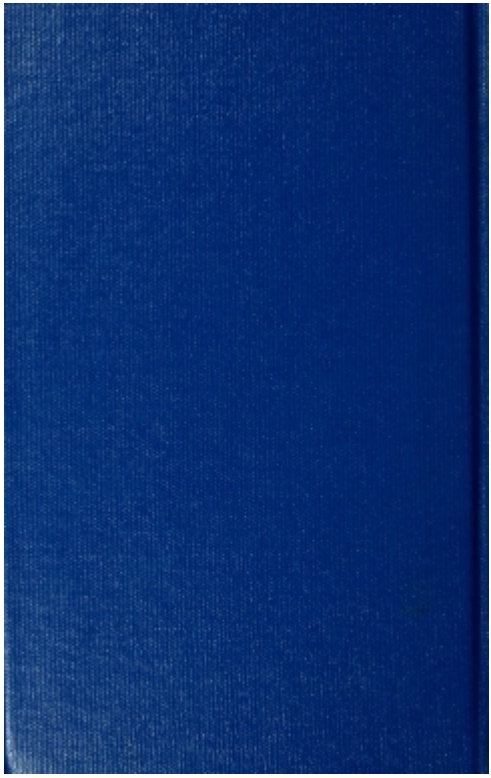
Hand him over over to us=> Hand him over to us {pg 301}

did not minish=> did not deminish {pg 382}

cavavan=> caravan {pg 409}

deserted by Patriach, 364;=> deserted by Patriarch, 364; {pg 427}

shrin of Mar Abd' Ishu, 306-7;=> shrine of Mar Abd' Ishu, 306-7; {pg 429}



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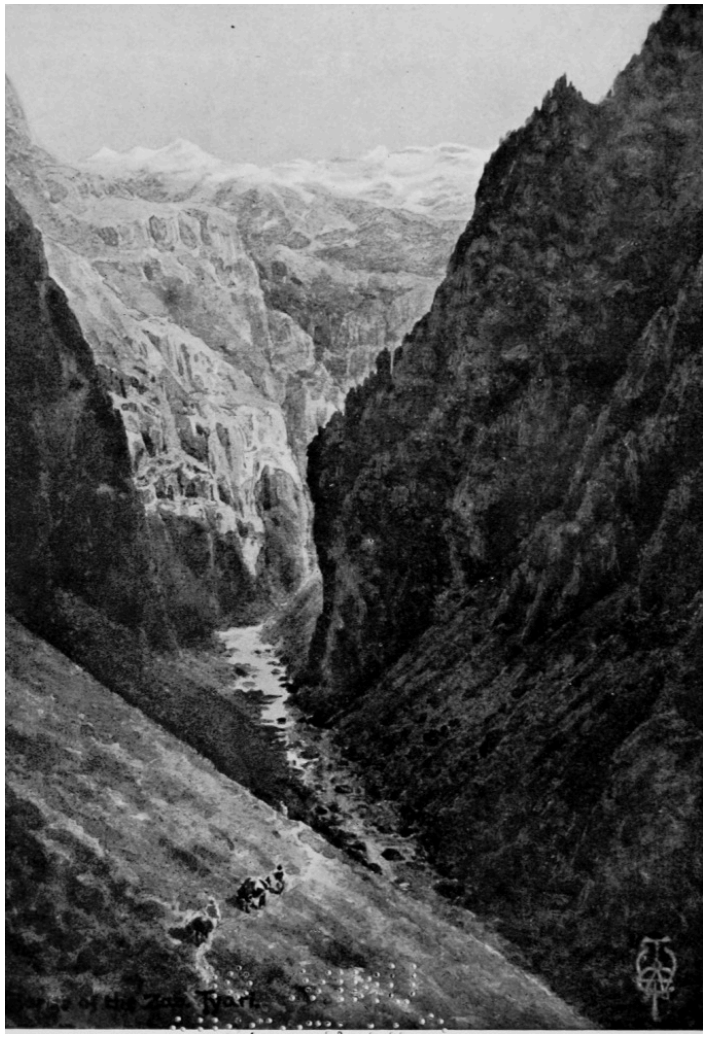
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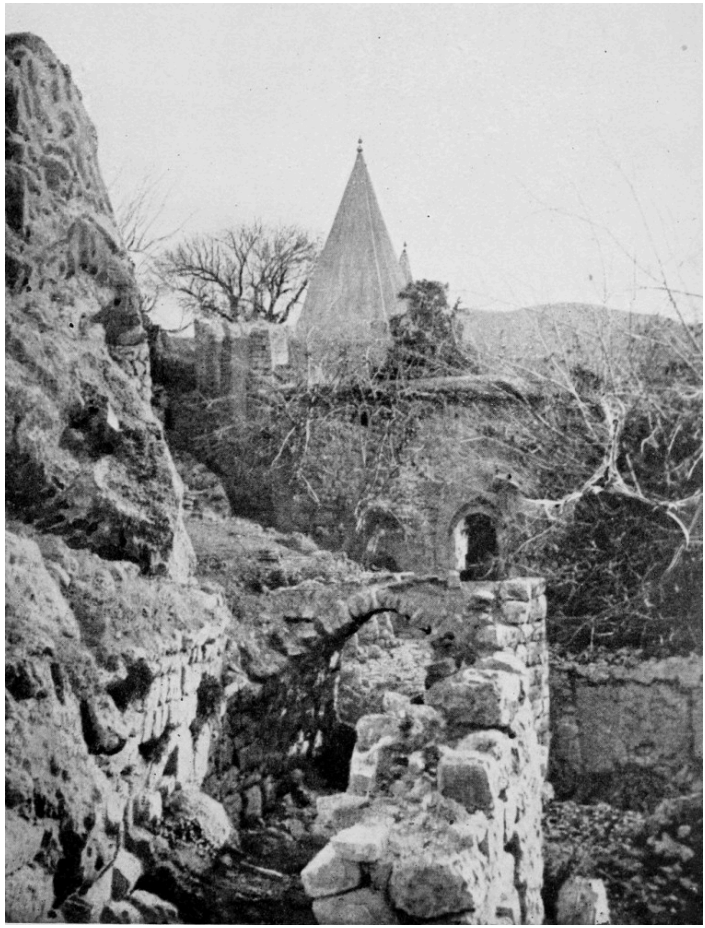
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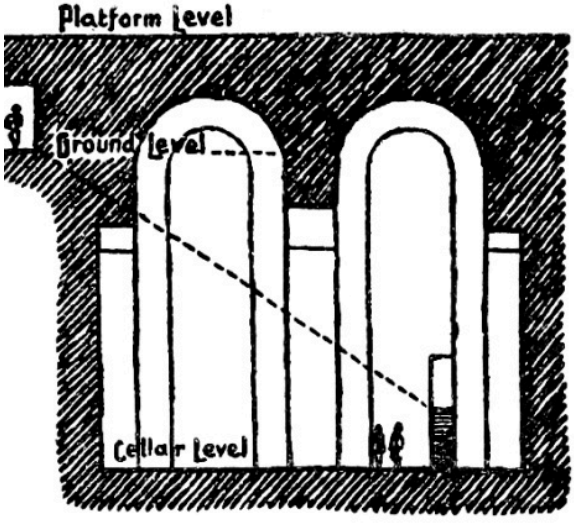
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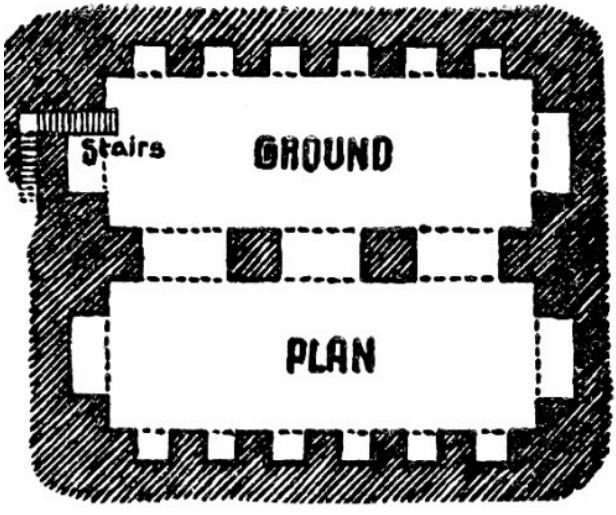
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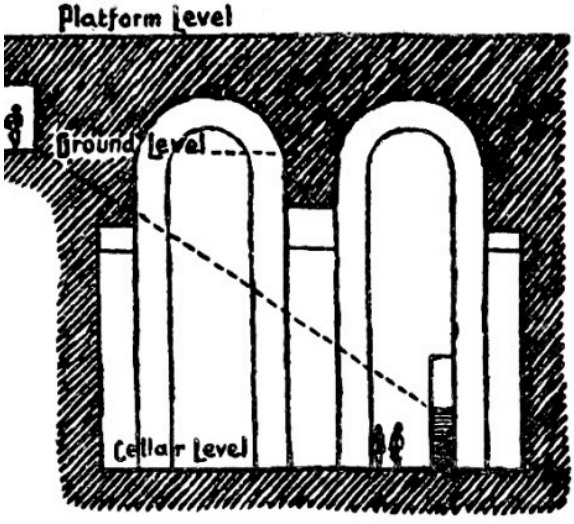


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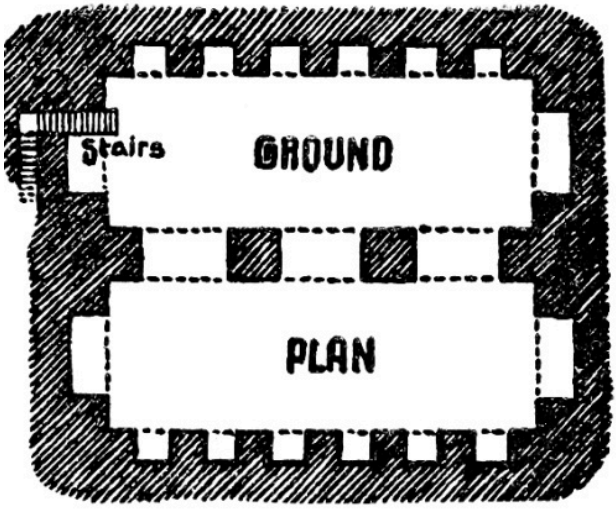


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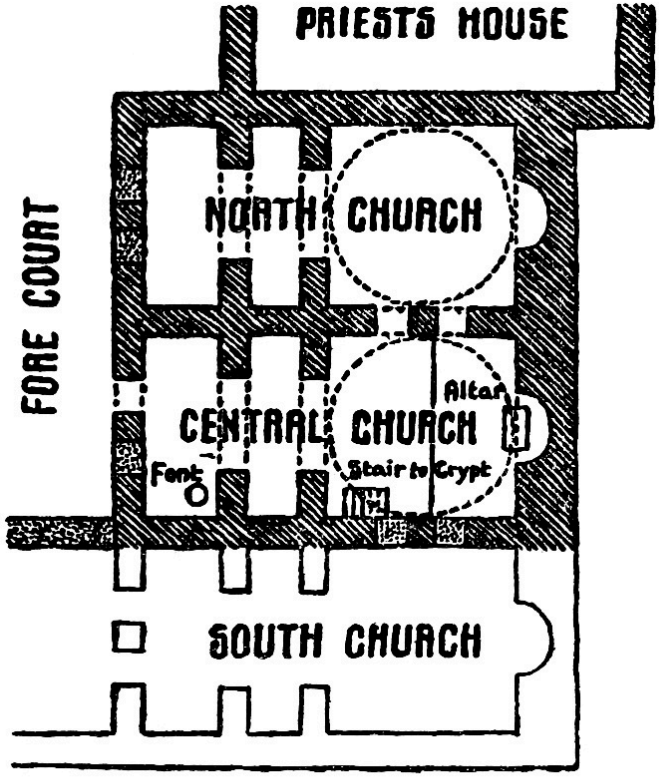


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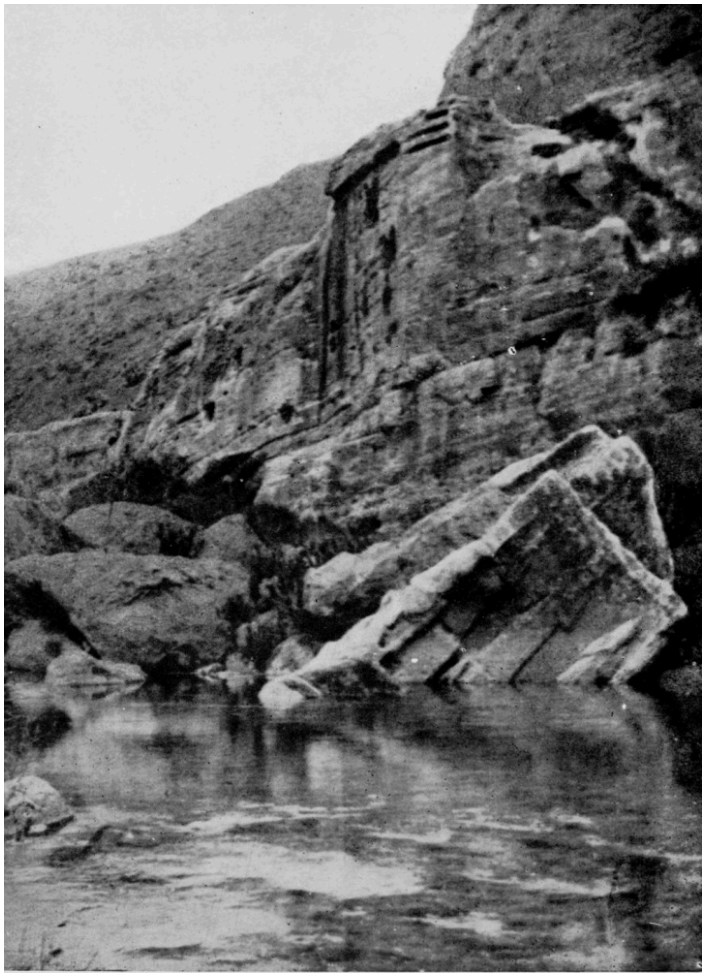
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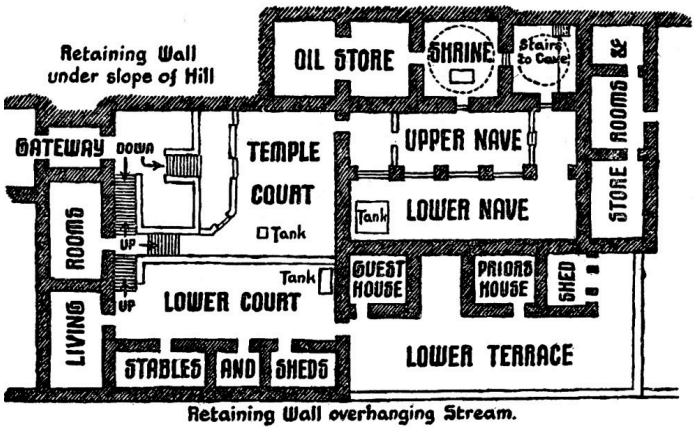


CHURCH OF SAINT JAMES AT NISIBIS

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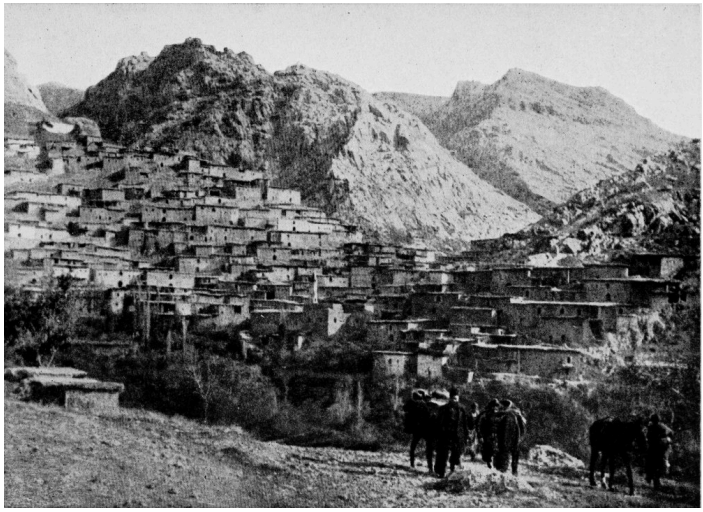


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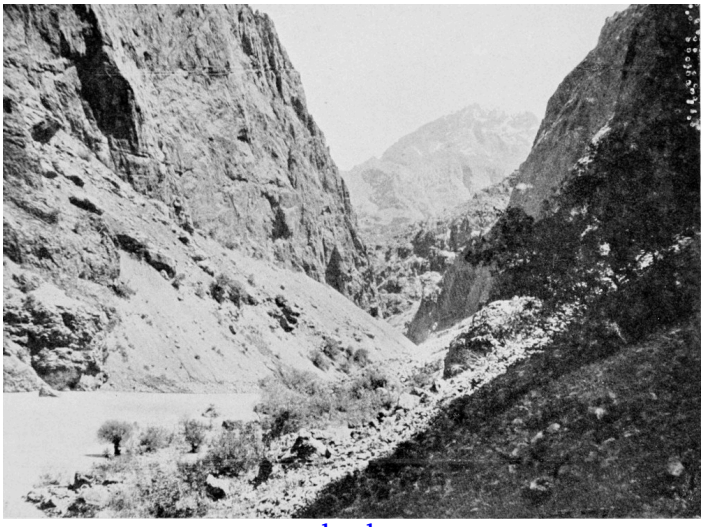


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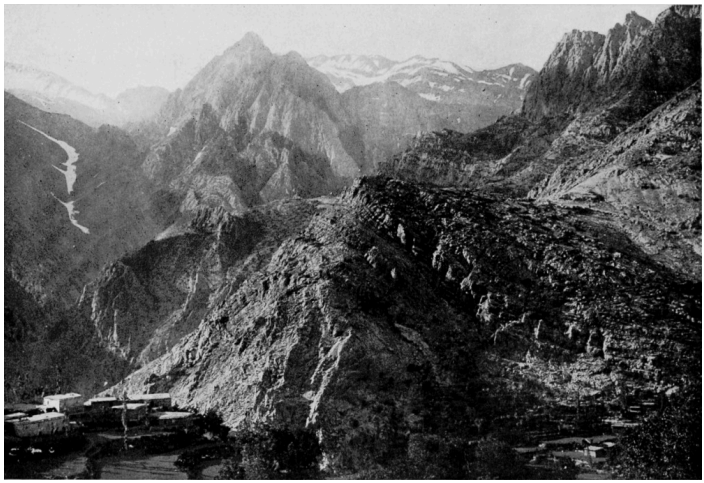
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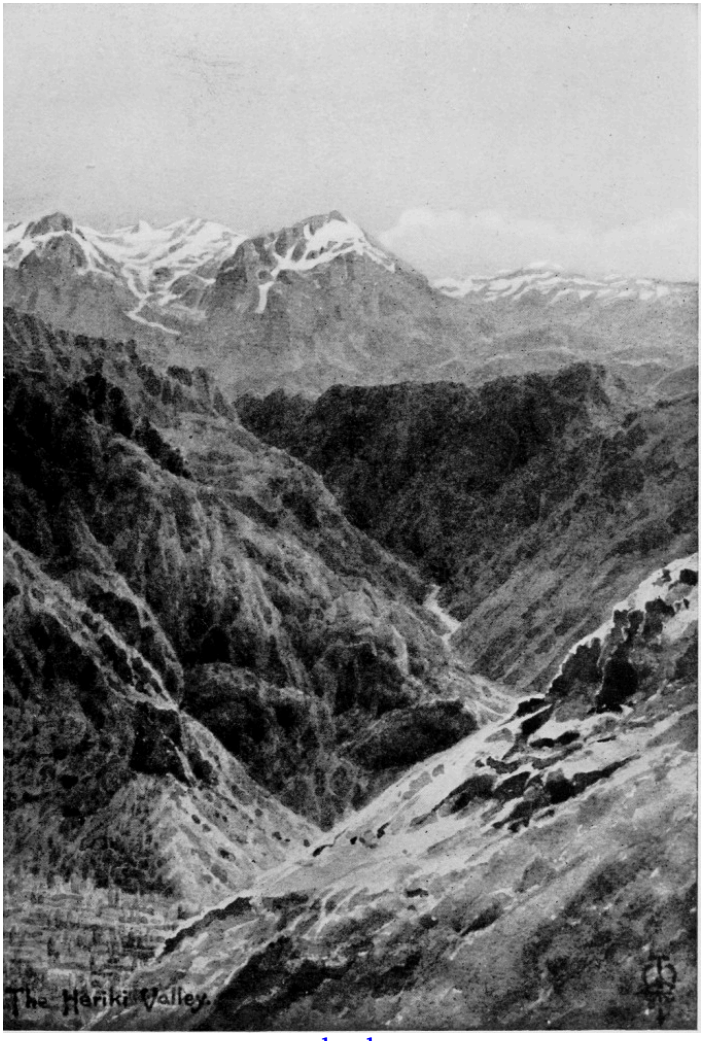
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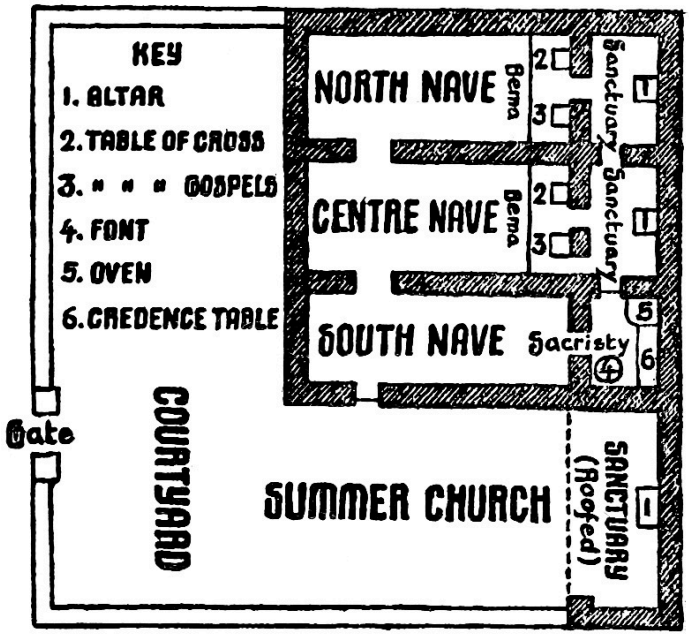
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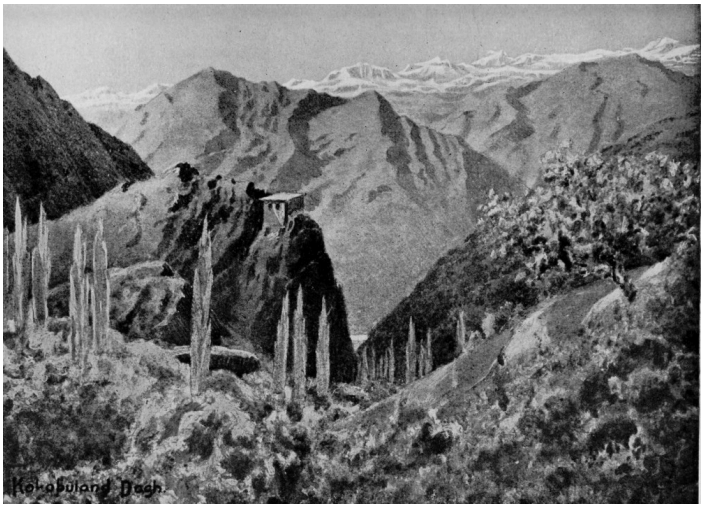


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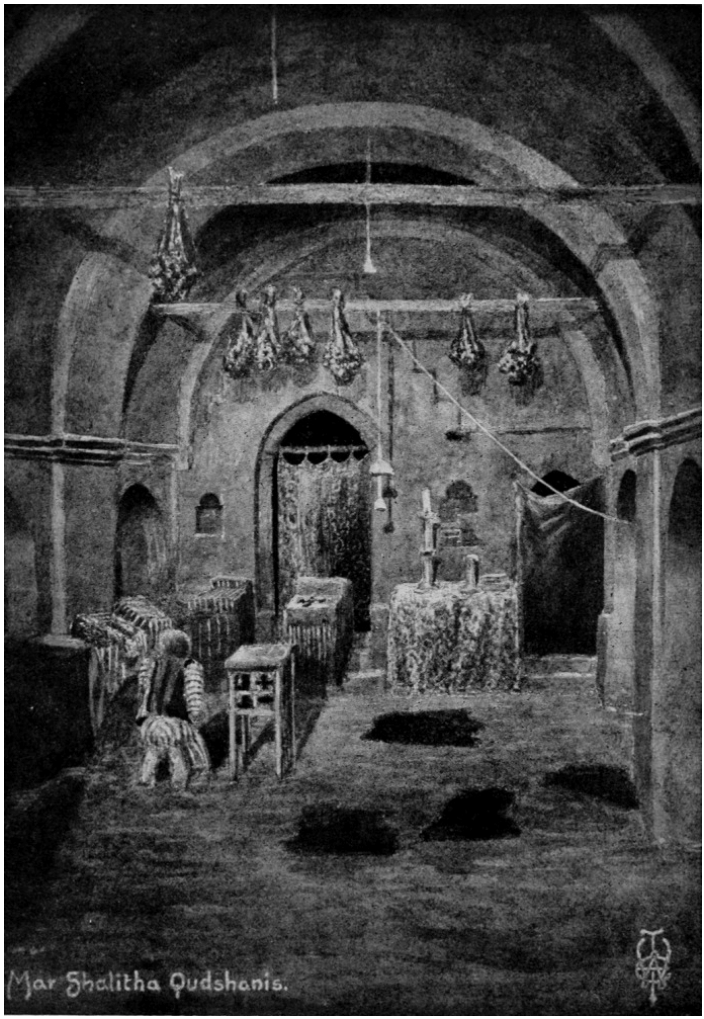
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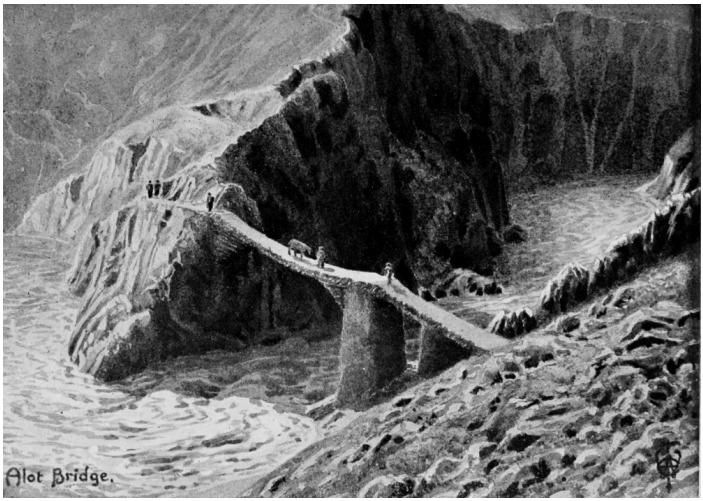
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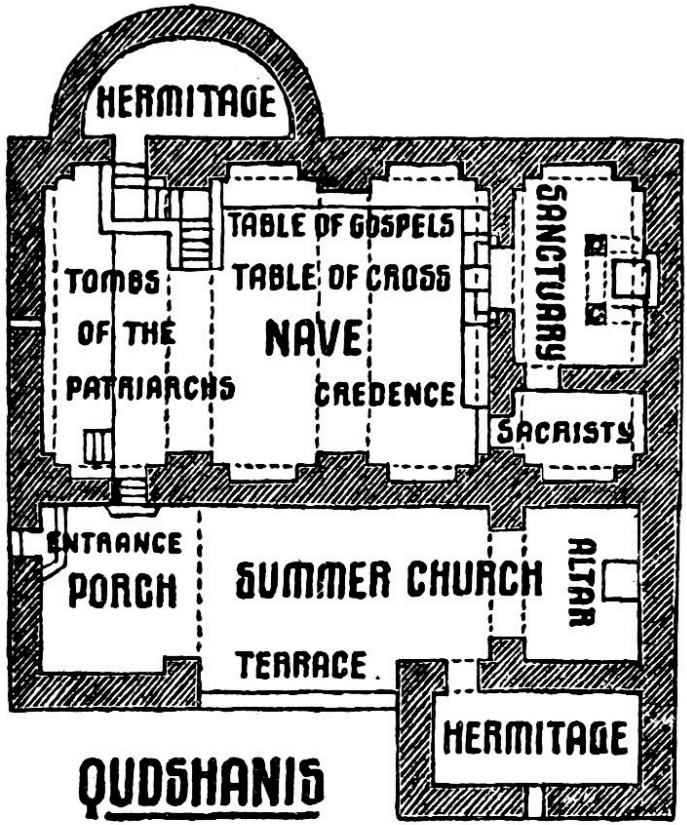
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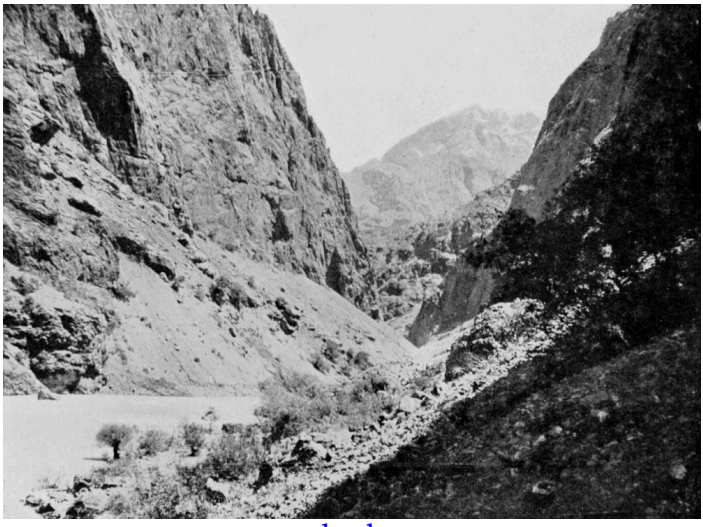


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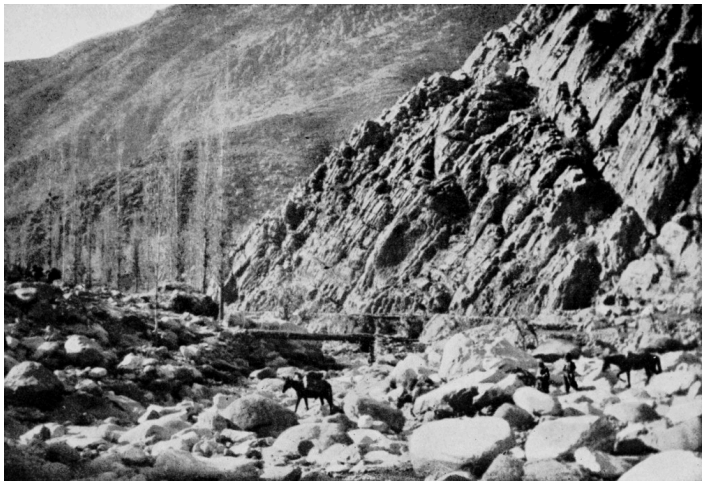


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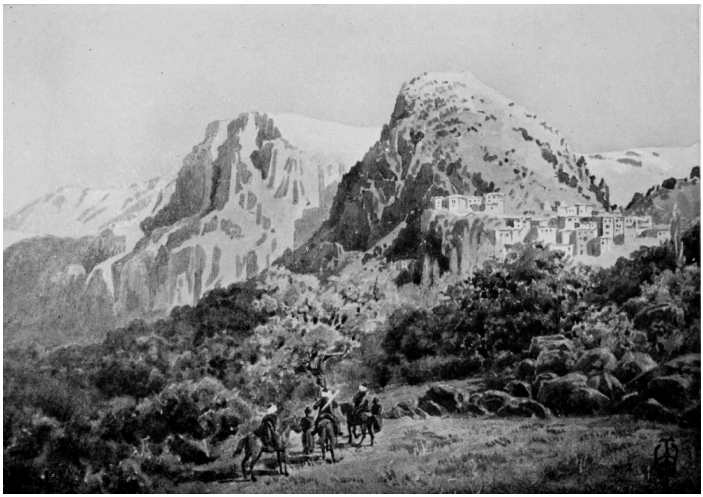
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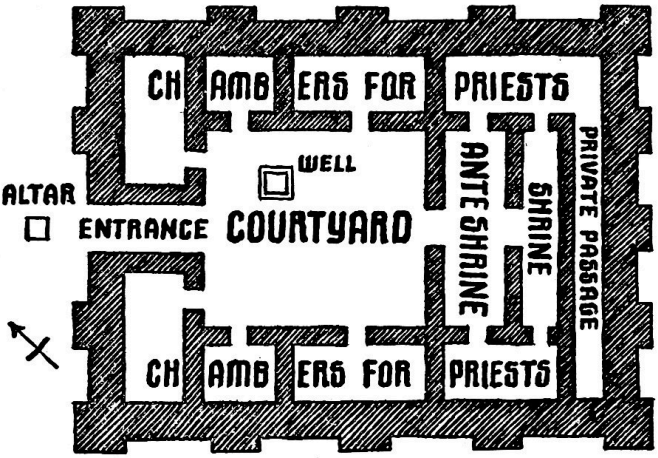
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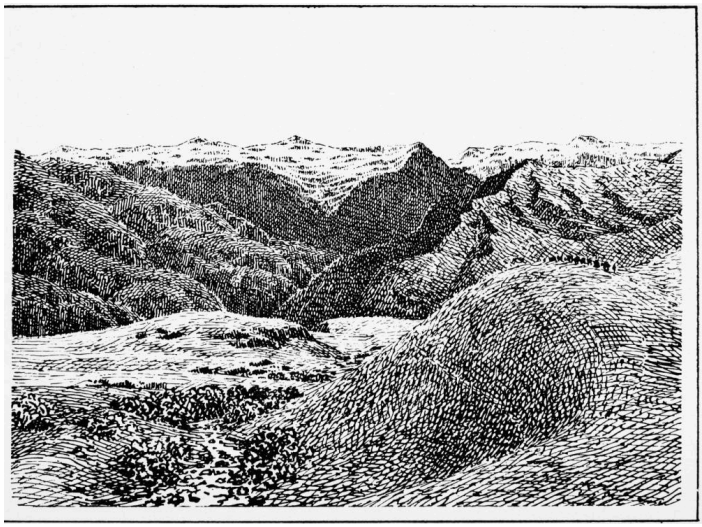


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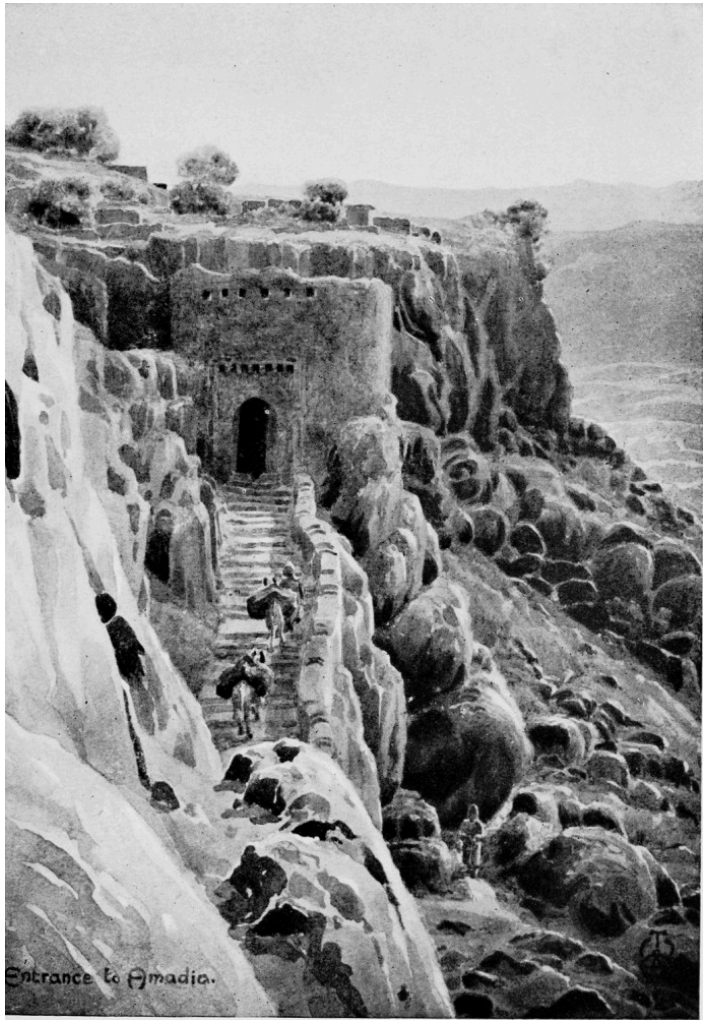


TEMPLE OF ISHTAR BABYLON

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MAP OF EASTERN KURDISTAN WITH INSET OF MESOPOTAMIA
LAKE VAN
BITLIS
VAN
DIARBEKR
River Tigris
BOHTAN
Mardin
Midiat
Dara
Nisibin
JEBEL TUR
Jezirat Ibn Omar
Sairt
Nimrud Dagh
Sipan Dagh
Lake Arishag
Khoi
Dilman
TABRIZ
URMI
Maragha
Soujbulak
SAPNA
Akra
Baviah
Alkosh
Nineveh
MOSUL
Jebal Sinjar
Erbil
Nimrud
River Zab
Lesser Zab River
Scale of English Miles
SKETCH MAP ACCOMPANYING "THE CRADLE OF MANKIND," BY W. A. WIGRAM, B.D., D.D., AND EDGAR T. A. WIGRAM. (A. & C. BLACK, LTD., LONDON.)

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MAP OF EASTERN KURDISTAN WITH INSET OF MESOPOTAMIA
LAKE VAN
BITLIS
DIARBEKR
River Tigris
BOHTAN
Mardin
Midiat
Nisibin
Dara
Jezira Ibn Omar
Sipan Dagh
Nimrud Dagh
Lake Anzhag
VAN
Khoi
Dilman
TABRIZ
URMI
Maragha
Sujbulak
SOLDUZ
BASHDOST
SAPPNA
Akra
Bavian
Alkosh
Shaikh Adi
Baadri
Babel Nahrain
Mosul
Nineveh
Nimrud
River Zab
Erbil
Lesser Zab River
Jebel Sinjar
ASIA MINOR
ARABIA
BLACK SEA
Scale of English Miles
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