BIRD ISABELLA LUCY

JOURNEYS IN PERSIA AND KURDISTAN, VOLUME 1 (OF 2)

Isabella Bird

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Journeys in Persia and Kurdistan, Volume 1 (of 2) / Including a Summer in the Upper Karun Region and a Visit to the Nestorian Rayahs

PREFACE

The letters of which these volumes are composed embrace the second half of journeys in the East extending over a period of two years.[1] They attempt to be a faithful record of facts and impressions, but were necessarily written in haste at the conclusion of fatiguing marches, and often in circumstances of great discomfort and difficulty, and I relied for their correction in the event of publication on notes made with much care. Unfortunately I was robbed of nearly the whole of these, partly on my last journey in Persia and partly on the Turkish frontier, –

[1] I left England with a definite object in view, to which others were subservient, but it is not necessary to obtrude it on the reader.

a serious loss, which must be my apology to the reader for errors which, without this misfortune, would not have occurred.

The bibliography of Persia is a very extensive one, and it may well be that I have little that is new to communicate, except on a part of Luristan previously untraversed by Europeans; but each traveller receives a different impression from those made upon his predecessors, and I hope that my book may be accepted as an honest attempt to make a popular contribution to the sum of knowledge of a country and people with which we are likely to be brought into closer relations.

As these volumes are simply travels in Persia and Eastern Asia Minor, and are *not a book on either country*, the references to such subjects as were not within the sphere of my observation are brief and incidental. The administration of government, the religious and legal systems, the tenure of land, and the mode of taxation are dismissed in a few lines, and social customs are only described when I came in contact with them. The Ilyats, or nomadic tribes, form a very remarkable element of the population of Persia, but I have only noticed two of their divisions – the Bakhtiari and Feili Lurs. The antiquities of Persia are also passed over with hardly a remark, as well as many other subjects, which have been "threshed out" by previous writers with more or less of accuracy.

I make these omissions with all the more satisfaction, because most that is "knowable" concerning Persia will be accessible on the publication of a work now in the Press, *Persia and*

the Persian Question, by the Hon. George N. Curzon, M.P., who has not only travelled extensively in the country, but has bestowed such enormous labour and research upon it, and has had such exceptional opportunities of acquiring the latest and best official information, that his volumes may fairly be described as "exhaustive."

It is always a pleasant duty to acknowledge kindness, and I am deeply grateful to several friends for the help which they have given me in many ways, and for the trouble which some of them have taken to recover facts which were lost with my notes, as well as for the careful revision of a portion of my letters in MS. I am indebted to the Indian authorities for the materials for a sketch map, for photographs from which many of the illustrations are taken, and for the use of a valuable geographical report, and to Mr. Thistleton Dyer, Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, for the identification of a few of my botanical specimens.

In justice to the many kind friends who received me into their homes, I am anxious to disclaim having either echoed or divulged their views on Persian or Turkish subjects, and to claim and accept the fullest responsibility for the opinions expressed in these pages, which, whether right or wrong, are wholly my own. It is from those who know Persia and Kurdistan the best that I am sure of receiving the most kindly allowance wherever, in spite of an honest desire to be accurate, I have fallen into mistakes.

The retention, not only of the form, but of the reality of diary letters, is not altogether satisfactory either to author or reader,

for the author sacrifices the literary and artistic arrangement of his materials, and however ruthlessly omissions are made, the reader is apt to find himself involved in a multiplicity of minor details, treated in a fashion which he is inclined to term "slipshod," and to resent the egotism which persistently clings to familiar correspondence. Still, even with all the disadvantages of this form of narrative, I think that letters are the best mode of placing the reader in the position of the traveller, and of enabling him to share, not only first impressions in their original vividness, and the interests and enjoyments of travelling, but the hardships, difficulties, and tedium which are their frequent accompaniments!

For the lack of vivacity which, to my thinking, pervades the following letters, I ask the reader's indulgence. They were originally written, and have since been edited, under the heavy and abiding shadow, not only of the loss of the beloved and only sister who was the inspiration of my former books of travel, and to whose completely sympathetic interest they owed whatever of brightness they possessed, but of my beloved husband, whose able and careful revision accompanied my last volume through the Press.

Believing that these letters faithfully reflect what I saw of the regions of which they treat, I venture to ask for them the same kindly and lenient criticism with which my travels in the Far East and elsewhere were received in bygone years, and to express the hope that they may help to lead towards that goal to which all

increase of knowledge of races and beliefs tends – a truer and kindlier recognition of the brotherhood of man, as seen in the light of the Fatherhood of God.

ISABELLA L. BISHOP.
November 12, 1891.

GLOSSARY

Abambar, a covered reservoir.
Agha, a master.
Andarun, women's quarters, a *haram*.
Arak, a coarse spirit.
Badgīr, wind-tower.
Badragah, a parting escort.
Balakhana, an upper room.
Bringals, egg plants.
Chapar, post.
Chapar Khana, post-house.
Chapi, the Bakhtiari national dance.
Charvadar, a muleteer.
Farāsh, *lit.* a carpet-spreader.
Farsakh, from three and a half to four miles.
Gardan, a pass.
Gaz, a sweetmeat made from manna.
Gelims, thin carpets, drugget.
Gheva, a summer shoe.
Gholam, an official messenger or attendant.
Hākim, a governor.
Hakīm, a physician.
Hammam, a Turkish or hot bath.
Ilyats, the nomadic tribes of Persia.

Imam, a saint, a religious teacher.
Imamzada, a saint's shrine.
Istikbal, a procession of welcome.
Jul, a horse's outer blanket.
Kabob, pieces of skewered meat seasoned and toasted.
Kafir, an infidel, a Christian.
Kah, chopped straw.
Kajawehs, horse-panniers.
Kalian, a "hubble-bubble" or water-pipe for tobacco.
Kamarband, a girdle.
Kanaat, an underground water-channel.
Kanat, the upright side of a tent.
Karsi, a wooden frame for covering a fire-hole.
Katirgi (Turkish), a muleteer.
Ketchuda, a headman of a village.
Khan, lord or prince; a designation as common as esquire.
Khan (Turkish), an inn.
Khanjar, a curved dagger.
Khanji (Turkish), the keeper of a *khan*.
Khanum, a lady of rank.
Khurjins, saddle bags.
Kizik, a slab of animal fuel.
Kotal, *lit.* a ladder, a pass.
Kourbana (Syriac), the Holy Communion.
Kran, eightpence.
Kuh, mountain.

Lira (Turkish), about £1.

Malek (Syriac, *lit.* king), a chief or headman.

Mamachi, midwife.

Mangel, a brazier.

Mast, curdled milk.

Medresseh, a college.

Mirza, a scribe, secretary, or gentleman. An educated man.

Modakel, illicit percentage.

Mollah, a religious teacher.

Munshi, a clerk, a teacher of languages.

Namad, felt.

Nasr, steward.

Odah (Turkish), a room occupied by human beings and animals.

Piastre, a Turkish coin worth two-pence-halfpenny.

Pirahan, a chemise or shirt.

Pish-kash, a nominal present.

Qasha (Syriac), a priest.

Rayahs, subject Syrians.

Roghan, clarified butter.

Samovar, a Russian tea-urn.

Sartip, a general.

Seraidar, the keeper of a caravanserai.

Sharbat, a fruit syrup.

Shroff, a money-changer.

Shuldari (*Shooldarry*), a small tent with two poles and a ridge

pole, but without *kanats*.

Shulwars, wide trousers.

Sowar, a horseman, a horse soldier.

Takchāh, a recess in a wall.

Taktrawan, a mule litter.

Tandūr, an oven in a floor.

Tang, a rift or defile.

Tufangchi, a foot soldier, an armed footman.

Tuman, seven shillings and sixpence.

Vakil, an authorised representative.

Vakil-u-Dowleh, agent of Government.

Yabu, a pony or inferior horse.

Yailaks, summer quarters.

Yekdan, a mule or camel trunk, made of leather.

Yohoort (Turkish), curdled milk.

Zaptieh (Turkish), a *gendarme*.

LETTER I

Basrah, Asiatic Turkey, Jan. 1, 1890.

A *shamal* or N.W. wind following on the sirocco which had accompanied us up "the Gulf" was lashing the shallow waters of the roadstead into reddish yeast as we let go the anchor opposite the sea front of Bushire, the most important seaport in Persia. *The* Persian man-of-war *Persepolis*, officered by Germans, H.M. ship *Sphinx*, two big steamers owned in London, a British-built three-masted clipper, owned and navigated by Arabs, and a few Arab native vessels tugged at their anchors between two and three miles from the shore. Native *buggalows* clustered and bumped round the trading vessels, hanging on with difficulty, or thumped and smashed through the short waves, close on the wind, easily handled and sailing magnificently, while the Residency steam-launch, puffing and toiling, was scarcely holding her own against a heavy head sea.

Bushire, though it has a number of two-storied houses and a population of 15,000, has a most insignificant appearance, and lies so low that from the *Assyria's* deck it gave the impression of being below the sea-level. The *shamal* was raising a sand storm in the desert beyond; the sand was drifting over it in yellow clouds, the mountains which at a greater or less distance give a wild sublimity to the eastern shores of the Gulf were blotted out, and

a blurred and windy shore harmonised with a blurred and windy sea.

The steam-launch, which after several baffled attempts succeeded in reaching the steamer's side, brought letters of welcome from Colonel Ross, who for eighteen years has filled the office of British Resident in the Persian Gulf with so much ability, judgment, and tact as to have earned the respect and cordial esteem of Persians, Arabs, the mixed races, and Europeans alike. Of his kindness and hospitality there is no occasion to write, for every stranger who visits the Gulf has large experience of both.

The little launch, though going shorewards with the wind, was tossed about like a cork, shipping deluges of spray, and it was so cold and generally tumultuous, that it was a relief to exchange the shallow, wind-lashed waters of the roadstead for the shelter of a projecting sea-wall below the governor's house. A curricle, with two fiery little Arab horses, took us over the low windy stretch of road which lies behind Bushire, through a part of the town and round again to the sea-shore, on which long yellow surges were breaking thunderously in drifts of creamy foam. The Residency, a large Persian house, with that sort of semi-fortified look which the larger Eastern houses are apt to have, is built round courtyards, and has a fine entrance, which was lined with well-set-up men of a Bombay marine battalion. As is usual in Persia and Turkey, the reception rooms, living rooms, and guest rooms are upstairs, opening on balconies, the lower part being

occupied by the servants and as domestic offices. Good fires were a welcome adjunct to the genial hospitality of Colonel Ross and his family, for the mercury, which for the previous week had ranged from 84° to 93°, since the sunrise of that day had dropped to 45°, and the cold, damp wind suggested an English February. Even the Residency, thick as its walls are, was invaded by sea sand, and penetrated by the howlings and shriekings of the *shamal* and the low hiss at intervals of wind-blown spray.

This miserable roadstead does a large trade,[2] though every bale and chest destined for the cities of the interior must be packed on mules' backs for carriage over the horrible and perilous *kotals* or rock ladders of the intervening mountain ranges. The chief caravan route in Persia starts from Bushire *viâ* Shiraz, Isfahan, Kashan, and Kûm, to Tihran. A loaded mule takes from thirty to thirty-five days to Isfahan, and from Isfahan to Tihran from twelve to sixteen days, according to the state of

[2] According to the returns for 1889, the British tonnage entering the Bushire roadstead was 111,745 out of 118,570 tons, and the imports from British territory amounted to a value of £744,018 out of £790,832. The exports from Bushire in the same year amounted to £535,076, that of opium being largely on the increase. Among other things exported are pistachio nuts, gum, almonds, madder, wool, and cotton. Regarding gum, the wars in the Soudan have affected the supply of it, and Persia is reaping the benefit, large quantities now being collected from certain shrubs, especially from the wild almond, which abounds at high altitudes. The drawback is that firewood and charcoal are becoming consequently dearer and scarcer. The gum exported in 1889 was 7472 cwts., as against 14,918 in 1888, but the value was more than the same.The imports into Bushire, as comparing 1889 with 1888, have increased by £244,186, and the exports by £147,862. The value of the export of opium, chiefly to China, was £231,521, as against £148,523 in 1888.

the roads.

Bushire does not differ in appearance from an ordinary eastern town. Irregular and uncleanly alleys, dead mud walls, with here and there a low doorway, bazars in which the requirements of caravans are largely considered, and in which most of the manufactured goods are English, a great variety in male attire, some small mosques, a marked predominance of the Arab physiognomy and costume, and ceaseless strings of asses bringing skins of water from wells a mile from the town, are my impressions of the first Persian city that I have ever seen. The Persian element, however, except in officialism and the style of building, is not strong, the population being chiefly composed of "Gulf Arabs." There are nearly fifty European residents, including the telegraph staff and the representatives of firms doing a very large business with England, the Persian Gulf Trading Company, Messrs. Hotz and Company, Messrs. Gray, Paul, and Company, and the British India Steam Navigation Company, which has enormously developed the trade of the Gulf.

Bushire is the great starting-point of travellers from India who desire "to go home through Persia" by Shiraz and Persepolis. *Charvadars* (muleteers) and the necessary outfit are obtainable, but even the kindness of the Resident fails to overcome the standing difficulty of obtaining a Persian servant who is both capable and trustworthy. Having been forewarned by him not to trust to Bushire for this indispensable article, I had brought

from India a Persian of good antecedents and character, who, desiring to return to his own country, was willing to act as my interpreter, courier, and sole attendant. Grave doubts of his ability to act in the two latter capacities occurred to me before I left Karachi, grew graver on the voyage, and were quite confirmed as we tossed about in the Residency launch, where the "young Persian gentleman," as he styled himself, sat bolt upright with a despairing countenance, dressed in a tall hat, a beautifully made European suit, faultless tan boots, and snowy collar and cuffs, a man of truly refined feeling and manners, but hopelessly out of place. I pictured him helpless among the *déshabillé* and roughnesses of a camp, and anticipated my insurmountable reluctance to ask of him menial service, and was glad to find that the same doubts had occurred to himself.

I lost no time in interviewing Hadji, – a Gulf Arab, who has served various travellers, has been ten times to Mecca, went to Windsor with the horses presented to the Queen by the Sultan of Muscat, speaks more or less of six languages, knows English fairly, has some recommendations, and professes that he is "up to" all the requirements of camp life. The next morning I engaged him as "man of all work," and though a big, wild-looking Arab in a rough *abba* and a big turban, with a long knife and a revolver in his girdle, scarcely looks like a lady's servant, I hope he may suit me, though with these antecedents he is more likely to be a scamp than a treasure.

The continuance of the *shamal* prevented the steamer from

unloading in the exposed roadstead, and knocked the launch about as we rejoined her. We called at the telegraph station at Fao, and brought off Dr. Bruce, the head of the Church Missionary Society's Mission at Julfa, whose long and intimate acquaintance with the country and people will make him a great acquisition on the Tigris.

"About sixty miles above the bar outside the Shat-el-Arab" (the united Tigris and Euphrates), "forty miles above the entrance to that estuary at Fao, and twenty miles below the Turkish port of Basrah, the present main exit of the Karun river flows into the Shat-el-Arab from the north-east by an artificial channel, whose etymology testifies to its origin, the Haffar" (dug-out) "canal. When this canal was cut, no one knows… Where it flows into the Shat-el-Arab it is about a quarter of a mile in width, with a depth of from twenty to thirty feet.

"The town of Mohammerah is situated a little more than a mile up the canal on its right bank, and is a filthy place, with about 2000 inhabitants, and consists mainly of mud huts and hovels, backed by a superb fringe of date palms."[3] In the rose flush of a winter morning we steamed slowly past this diplomatically famous confluence of the Haffar and Shat-el-Arab, at the angle of which the Persians have lately built a quay, a governor's house, and a large warehouse, in expectation of a trade which shows few signs of development.

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[3] "The Karun River," Hon. G. Curzon, M.P., *Proceedings of R.G.S.*, September 1890.

A winter morning it was indeed, splendid and invigorating after the ferocious heat of the Gulf. To-day there has been frost!

The Shat-el-Arab is a noble river or estuary. From both its Persian and Turkish shores, however, mountains have disappeared, and dark forests of date palms intersected by canals fringe its margin heavily, and extend to some distance inland. The tide is strong, and such native boats as *belems*, *buggalows*, and dug-outs, loaded with natives and goods, add a cheerful element of busy life.

We anchored near Basrah, below the foreign settlement, and had the ignominy of being placed for twenty-four hours in quarantine, flying the degrading yellow flag. Basrah has just been grievously ravaged by the cholera, which has not only carried off three hundred of the native population daily for some time, but the British Vice-Consul and his children. Cholera still exists in Turkey while it is extinct in Bombay, and the imposition of quarantine on a ship with a "clean bill of health" seems devised for no other purpose than to extract fees, to annoy, and to produce a harassing impression of Turkish officialism.

After this detention we steamed up to the anchorage, which is in front of a few large bungalows which lie between the belt of palms and the river, and form the European settlement of Margil. A fever-haunted swamp, with no outlet but the river; canals exposing at low water deep, impassable, and malodorous slime separating the bungalows; a climate which is damp, hot, malarious, and prostrating except for a few weeks in winter, and

a total absence of all the resources and amenities of civilisation, make Basrah one of the least desirable places to which Europeans are exiled by the exigencies of commerce. It is scarcely necessary to say that the few residents exercise unbounded hospitality, which is the most grateful memory which the stranger retains of the brief halt by the "River of Arabia."

This is the dead season in the "city of dates." An unused river steamer, a large English trader, two Turkish ships-of-war painted white, the *Mejidieh*, one of two English-owned steamers which are allowed to ply on the Tigris, and the *Assyria* of the B.I.S.N. Co., constitute the fleet at anchor. As at Bushire, all cargo must be loaded and unloaded by boats, and crowds of native craft hanging on to the trading vessels give a little but not much vivacity.

October, after the ingathering of the date harvest, is the busiest month here. The magnitude of the date industry may be gathered from the fact that in 1890, 60,000 tons of dates were exported from Basrah, 20,000 in boxes, and the remainder in palm-leaf mats, one vessel taking 1800 tons. The quantity of wood imported for the boxes was 7000 tons in cut lengths, with iron hooping, nails, and oiled paper for inside wrapping, brought chiefly from England.

A hundred trees can be grown on an acre of ground. The mature tree gives a profit of 4s., making the profit on an acre £20 annually. The Governor of Mohammerah has lately planted 30,000 trees, and date palms to the number of 60,000 have been

recently planted on Persian soil.

It is said that there are 160 varieties of dates, but only a few are known to commerce. These great sombre date forests or "date gardens," which no sunshine can enliven, are of course artificial, and depend upon irrigation. The palms are propagated by means of suckers taken from the female date. The young trees begin to bear when they are about five years old, reach maturity at nine, and may be prolific for two centuries. Mohammed said wisely, "Honour the palm, it is your paternal aunt." One soon learns here that it not only provides the people with nutritious food, but with building materials, as well as with fuel, carpets, ropes, and mats. But it is the least beautiful of the palms, and the dark monotonous masses along the river contrast with my memories of the graceful coco palm fringing the coral islands of the Pacific.

I left the *Assyria* with regret. The captain and officers had done all that intelligence and kindness could do to make the voyage an agreeable one, and were altogether successful. On shore a hospitable reception, a good fire, and New Year's Day come together appropriately. The sky is clear and cloudless, and the air keen. The bungalows belonging to the European firms are dwelling-houses above and offices below, and are surrounded by packing-yards and sheds for goods. In line with them are the Consulates.

The ancient commercial glories of Basrah are too well known to need recapitulation. Circumstances are doing much to give it something of renewed importance. The modern Basrah, a

town which has risen from a state of decay till it has an estimated population of 25,000, is on the right bank of the river, at some distance up a picturesque palm-fringed canal. Founded by Omar soon after the death of Mohammed, and tossed like a shuttlecock between Turk and Persian, it is now definitely Turkish, and the great southern outlet of Chaldæa and Mesopotamia, as well as the port at which the goods passing to and from Baghdad "break bulk." A population more thoroughly polyglot could scarcely be found, Turks, Arabs, Sabeans, Syrians, Greeks, Hindus, Armenians, Frenchmen, Wahabees, Britons, Jews, Persians, Italians, and Africans, and there are even more creeds than races.

S.S. Mejidieh, River Tigris, Jan. 4.– Leaving Basrah at 4 p. m. on Tuesday we have been stemming the strong flood of the Tigris for three bright winter days, in which to sit by a red-hot stove and sleep under a pile of blankets have been real luxuries after the torrid heat of the "Gulf." The party on board consists of Dr. Bruce, Mr. Hammond, who has been for some months pushing British trade at Shuster, the Assistant Quartermaster-General for India, a French-speaking Jewish merchant, the Hon. G. Curzon, M.P., and Mr. Swabadi, a Hungarian gentleman in the employment of the Tigris and Euphrates Steam Navigation Company, a very scholarly man, who in the course of a long residence in Southern Turkey has acquainted himself intimately with the country and its peoples, and is ever ready to place his own stores of information at our disposal. Mr. Curzon has

been "prospecting" the Karun river, and came on board from the *Shushan*, a small stern-wheel steamer with a carrying capacity of 30 tons, a draught when empty of 18 inches, and when laden of from 24 to 36. She belongs to the Messrs. Lynch Brothers, of the Tigris and Euphrates S.N. Co. They run her once a fortnight at a considerable loss between Mohammerah and Ahwaz. Her isolated position and diminutive size are a curious commentary on the flourish of trumpets and *blether* of exultation with which the English newspapers announced the very poor concession of leave to run steamers on the Karun between the Shat-el-Arab and Ahwaz.

[Since this letter was written, things have taken rather a singular turn, and the development of trade on the Karun has partly fallen into the hands of a trading corporation of Persians, the *Nasiri* Company. By them, and under their representative partner, Haja Mahomad, a man of great energy, the formidable rapids at Ahwaz are being circumvented by the construction of a tramway 2400 yards long, which is proceeding steadily. A merchants' caravanserai has already been built on the river bank at the lower landing-place and commencement of the tramway, and a bakery, butchery, and carpentry, along with a *café* and a grocery and general goods stores, have already been opened by men brought to Ahwaz by H. Mahomad.

A river face wall, where native craft are to lie, is being constructed of hewn stone blocks and sections of circular pillars, remains of the ancient city.

The *Nasiri* Company has a small steamer, the *Nasiri*, plying on the lower Karun, chiefly as a tug, taking up two Arab boats of twenty-seven tons each, lashed alongside of her. On her transference at the spring floods of this year to the river above Ahwaz, the *Karun*, a steam launch of about sixty tons, belonging to the Governor of Mohammerah, takes her place below, and a second steamer belonging to the same company is now running on the lower stream. Poles from Zanzibar have been distributed for a telegraph line from Mohammerah to Ahwaz. The Messrs. Lynch have placed a fine river steamer of 300 tons on the route; but this enterprising firm, and English capitalists generally, are being partially "cut out" by the singular "go" of this Persian company, which not only appears to have strong support from Government quarters, but has gained the co-operation of the well-known and wealthy Sheikh Mizal, whose personal influence in Arabistan is very great, and who has hitherto been an obstacle to the opening of trade on the Karun.

A great change for the better has taken place in the circumstances of the population, and villages, attracted by trade, are springing up, which the *Nasiri* Company is doing its best to encourage. The land-tax is very light, and the cultivators are receiving every encouragement. Much wheat was exported last year, and there is a brisk demand for river lands on leases of sixty years for the cultivation of cotton, cereals, sugar-cane, and date palms.

Persian soldiers all have their donkeys, and at Ahwaz a brisk

and amusing competition is going on between the soldiers of a fine regiment stationed there and the Arabs for the transport of goods past the rapids, and for the conveyance of tramway and building materials. This competition is enabling goods to pass the rapids cheaply and expeditiously.

One interesting feature connected with these works is the rapidly increased well-being of the Arabs. In less than a year labour at 1 *kran* (8d.) a day has put quite a number of them in possession of a pair of donkeys and a plough, and seed-corn wherewith to cultivate Government lands on their own account, besides leaving a small balance in hand on which to live without having to borrow on the coming crop at frightfully usurious rates.

Until now the sheikhs have been able to command labour for little more than the poorest food; and now many of the very poor who depended on them have started as small farmers, and things are rapidly changing.

The careful observer, from whose report on Persia to the Foreign Office, No. 207, I have transferred the foregoing facts, wrote in January 1891: "It was a sight to see the whole Arab population on the river banks hard at work taking advantage of the copious rain which had just fallen; every available animal fit for draught was yoked to the plough – horses, mules, bullocks, and donkeys, and even mares, with their foals following them up the furrows."

This, which is practically a Persian opening of the trade of the Karun, is not what was expected, however much it was to

be desired. After a journey of nine months through Persia, I am strongly of opinion that if the Empire is to have a solid and permanent resurrection, it must be through the enterprise of Persians, aided it may be by foreign skill and capital, though the less of the latter that is employed the more hopefully I should regard the Persian future. The *Nasiri* Company and the Messrs. Lynch may possibly unite, and the New Road Company may join with them in making a regular transport service by river and road to Tihran, by which England may pour her manufactured goods even into Northern Persia, as this route would compete successfully both with the Baghdad and Trebizond routes.

Already, owing to the improved circumstances of the people, the import of English and Indian cotton goods and of sugar has increased; the latter, which is French, from its low price, only 2½d. a pound in the Gulf, pushing its way as far north as Sultanabad. Unfortunately the shadow of Russia hangs over the future of Persia.]

At present two English and four Turkish boats run on the Tigris. They are necessarily of light draught, as the river is shallow at certain seasons and is full of shifting sand-banks. The *Mejidieh* is a comfortable boat, with a superabundance of excellent food. Her saloon, state-rooms, and engines are on the main deck, which is open fore and aft, and has above it a fine hurricane deck, on the fore part of which the deck passengers, a motley crowd, encamp. She is fully loaded with British goods.

The first object of passing interest was Kornah, reputed

among the Arabs to be the site of the Garden of Eden, a tongue of land at the junction of the Tigris and Euphrates. The "Garden of Eden" contains a village, and bright fires burned in front of the mat-and-mud houses. Women in red and white, and turbaned men in brown, flitted across the firelight; there was a mass of vegetation, chiefly palms with a number of native vessels moored to their stems, and a leaning minaret. A frosty moonlight glorified the broad, turbid waters, Kornah and the Euphrates were left in shadow, and we turned up the glittering waterway of the Tigris. The night was too keenly frosty for any dreams of Paradise, even in this classic Chaldæa, and under a sky blazing down to the level horizon with the countless stars which were not to outnumber the children of "Faithful Abraham."

Four hours after leaving Kornah we passed the reputed tomb of Ezra the prophet. At a distance and in the moonlight it looked handsome. There is a buttressed river wall, and above it some long flat-roofed buildings, the centre one surmounted by a tiled dome. The Tigris is so fierce and rapid, and swallows its alluvial banks so greedily, that it is probable that some of the buildings described by the Hebrew traveller Benjamin of Tudela as existing in the twelfth century were long since carried away. The tomb is held in great veneration not only by Jews and Moslems but also by Oriental Christians. It is a great place of Jewish pilgrimage, and is so venerated by the Arabs that it needs no guard.[4]

[4] Sir A. H. Layard describes the interior of the domed building as consisting of two chambers, the outer one empty, and the inner one containing the Prophet's tomb, built

Hadji brought my breakfast, or as he called it, "the grub," the next morning, and I contemplated the Son of Abraham with some astonishment. He had discarded his turban and *abba*, and looked a regular uncivilised desert Ishmaelite, with knives and rosaries in his belt, and his head muffled in a *kiffiyeh*, a yellow silk shawl striped with red, with one point and tassels half a yard long hanging down his back, and fastened round his head by three coils of camel's-hair rope. A loose coat with a gay girdle, "breeks" of some kind, loose boots turned up at the toes and reaching to the knees, and a striped under-garment showing here and there, completed his costume.

The view from the hurricane deck, though there are no striking varieties, is too novel to be monotonous. The level plains of Chaldæa, only a few feet higher than the Tigris, stretch away to the distant horizon, unbroken until to-day, when low hills, white with the first snows of winter, are softly painted on a pure blue sky, very far away. The plains are buff and brown, with an occasional splash, near villages as buff and brown as the soil out of which they rise, of the dark-green of date gardens, or the vivid green of winter wheat. With the exception of these gardens, which are rarely seen, the vast expanse is unbroken by a tree. A few miserable shrubs there are, the *mimosa agrestis* or St. John's bread, and a scrubby tamarisk, while liquorice,

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of bricks covered with white stucco, and enclosed in a wooden case or ark, over which is thrown a large blue cloth, fringed with yellow tassels, the name of the donor being inscribed in Hebrew characters upon it. – Layard's *Early Adventures*, vol. i. p. 214.

wormwood, capers, and some alkaline plants which camels love, are recognisable even in their withered condition.

There are a few villages of low mud hovels enclosed by square mud walls, and hamlets of mat huts, the mats being made of woven sedges and flags, strengthened by palm fronds, but oftener by the tall, tough stems of growing reeds bent into arches, and woven together by the long leaves of aquatic plants, chiefly rushes. The hovels, so ingeniously constructed, are shared indiscriminately by the Arabs and their animals, and crowds of women and children emerged from them as we passed. Each village has its arrangement for raising water from the river.

Boats under sail, usually a fleet at a time, hurry downstream, owing more to the strong current than to the breeze, or are hauled up laboriously against both by their Arab crews.

The more distant plain is sparsely sprinkled with clusters of brown tents, long and low, and is dotted over with flocks of large brown sheep, shepherded by Arabs in *kiffiyehs*, each shepherd armed with a long gun slung over his shoulder. Herds of cattle and strings of camels move slowly over the brown plain, and companies of men on horseback, with long guns and lances, gallop up to the river bank, throw their fiery horses on their haunches, and after a moment of gratified curiosity wheel round and gallop back to the desert from which they came. Occasionally a stretch of arable land is being ploughed up by small buffaloes with most primitive ploughs, but the plains are pastoral chiefly, tents and flocks are their chief

features – features which have changed little since the great Sheikh Abraham, whose descendants now people them, left his "kindred" in the not distant Ur of the Chaldees, and started on the long march to Canaan.

Reedy marshes, alive with water-fowl, arable lands, bare buff plains, brown tents, brown flocks, mat huts, mud and brick villages, groups of women and children, flights of armed horsemen, alternate rapidly, – the unchanging features are the posts and wires of the telegraph.

The Tigris in parts is wonderfully tortuous, and at one great bend, "The Devil's Elbow," a man on foot can walk the distance in less than an hour which takes the steamer four hours to accomplish. The current is very strong, and the slow progress is rendered slower at this season of low water by the frequent occurrence of sand-banks, of which one is usually made aware by a jolt, a grinding sound, a cessation of motion, some turns astern, and then full speed ahead, which often overcomes the obstacle. Some hours' delay and the floats of one paddle-wheel injured were the most serious disasters brought about; and in spite of the shallows at this season, the Tigris is a noble river, and the voyage is truly fascinating. Not that there are many remarkable objects, but the desert atmosphere and the desert freedom are in themselves delightful, the dust and *débris* are the dust and *débris* of mighty empires, and there are countless associations with the earliest past of which we have any records.

Aimarah, a rising Turkish town of about 7000 people, built

at a point where the river turns at a sharp angle to the left, is interesting as showing what commerce can create even here, in less than twenty years. A caravan route into Persia was opened and Aimarah does a somewhat busy trade. Flat-faced brick buildings, with projecting lattice windows, run a good way along the left bank of the river, which is so steep and irregular that the crowd which thronged it when the steamer made fast was shown to great advantage – Osmanlis, Greeks, Persians, Sabeans, Jews of great height and superb *physique*, known by much-tasselled turbans, and a predominating Arab element.

We walked down the long, broad, covered bazar, with a broken water channel in the middle, where there were crowds, solely of men, meat, game, bread, fruit, grain, lentils, horse-shoes, pack saddles, Manchester cottons, money-changers, silversmiths, and scribes, and heard the roar of business, and the thin shouts of boys unaccustomed to the sight of European women. The crowds pressed and followed, picking at my clothes, and singing snatches of songs which were not complimentary. It had not occurred to me that I was violating rigid custom in appearing in a hat and gauze veil rather than in a *chadar* and face cloth, but the mistake was made unpleasantly apparent. In Moslem towns women go about in companies and never walk with men.

We visited an enclosed square, where there are barracks for *zaptiehs* (gendarmes), the Kadi's court, and the prison, which consists of an open grating like that of a menagerie, a covered

space behind, and dark cells or dens opening upon it, all better than the hovels of the peasantry. There were a number of prisoners well clothed, and apparently well fed, to whom we were an obvious diversion, but the guards gesticulated, shouted, and brandished their side-arms, making us at last understand that our presence in front of the grating was forbidden. After seeing a large barrack yard, and walking, still pursued by a crowd, round the forlorn outskirts of Aimarah, which include a Sabean village, we visited the gold and silversmiths' shops where the Sabeans were working at their craft, of which in this region they have nearly a monopoly, not only settling temporarily in the towns, but visiting the Arab encampments on the plains, where they are always welcome as the makers and repairers of the ornaments with which the women are loaded. These craftsmen and others of the race whom I have seen differ greatly from the Arabs in appearance, being white rather than brown, very white, *i. e.* very pale, with jet-black hair; large, gentle, intelligent eyes; small, straight noses, and small, well-formed mouths. The handsome faces of these "Christians of St. John" are very pleasing in their expression, and there was a dainty cleanliness about their persons and white clothing significant of those frequent ablutions of both which are so remarkable a part of their religion. The children at Aimarah, and generally in the riparian villages, wear very handsome chased, convex silver links, each as large as the top of a breakfast cup, to fasten their girdles.

The reedy marshes, the haunts of pelicans and pigs, are left

behind at Aimarah, and tamarisk scrub and liquorice appear on the banks. At Kut-al-Aimarah, a small military post and an Arab town of sun-dried bricks on the verge of a high bank above the Tigris, we landed again, and ragamuffin boys pressed very much upon us, and ragamuffin *zaptiehs*,[5] grotesquely dressed in clothes of different European nationalities, pelted them with stones. To take up stones and throw them at unwelcome visitors is a frequent way of getting rid of them in the less civilised parts of the East.

A *zaptieh* station, barracks, with a large and badly-kept parade ground, a covered bazar well supplied, houses with blank walls, large *cafés* with broad matted benches, asafœtida, crowds of men of superb *physique*, picturesque Arabs on high-bred horses, and a total invisibility of women, were the salient features of Kut-al-Aimarah. Big-masted, high-stemmed boats, the broad, turbid Tigris with a great expanse of yellowish sand on its farther shore, reeds "shaken with the wind," and a windy sky, heavily overcast, made up the view from the bank. There were seen for the first time by the new-comers the most venerable boats in the world, for they were old even when Herodotus mentions them —*kufas* or *gophers*, very deep round baskets covered with bitumen, with incurved tops, and worked by one man with a paddle. These remarkable tubs are used for the conveyance of passengers, goods, and even animals.

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[5] A year later in Kurdistan, the *zaptiehs*, all time-expired soldiers and well set up soldierly men, wore neat, serviceable, dark blue braided uniforms, and high riding-boots.

Before leaving we visited the Arab Khan or Sheikh in his house. He received us in an upper room of difficult access, carpeted with very handsome rugs, and with a divan similarly covered, but the walls of brown mud were not even plastered. His manner was dignified and courteous, and his expression remarkably shrewd. A number of men sitting on the floor represented by their haughty aspect and magnificent *physique* the royalty of the Ishmaelite descent from Abraham. This Khan said that his tribe could put 3000 fighting men into the field, but it was obvious that its independence is broken, and that these tribal warriors are reckoned as Osmanli irregulars or Bashi Bazouks. The Khan remarked that "the English do not make good friends, for," he added, "they back out when difficulties arise."

On board the steamer the condition of the Arabs is much discussed, and the old residents describe it as steadily growing worse under the oppression and corruption of the Osmanli officials, who appear to be doing their best to efface these fine riparian tribes by merciless exactions coming upon the top of taxation so heavy as to render agriculture unprofitable, the impositions actually driving thousands of them to seek a living in the cities and to the Persian shores of the Gulf, where they exchange a life of hereditary freedom for a precarious and often scanty subsistence among unpropitious surroundings. Still, the Arab of the desert is not conquered by the Turks.

LETTER I (*Continued*)

Baghdad, Jan. 5.

The last day on the Tigris passed as pleasantly as its predecessors. There was rain in the early morning, then frost which froze the rain on deck, and at 7 a. m. the mercury in my cabin stood at 28°.

In the afternoon the country became more populous, that is, there were *kraals* of mat huts at frequent intervals, and groups of tents to which an external wall of mats gave a certain aspect of permanence. Increased cultivation accompanied the increased population. In some places the ground was being scratched with a primitive plough of unshod wood, or a branch of a tree slightly trimmed, leaving a scar about two inches deep. These scars, which pass for furrows, are about ten inches apart, and camel thorn, tamarisk, and other shrubs inimical to crops stand between them. The seed is now being sown. After it comes up it grows apace, and in spite of shallow scratches, camel thorn, and tamarisk the tilth is so luxuriant that the husbandmen actually turn cattle and sheep into it for two or three weeks, and then leave it to throw up the ear! They say that there are from eighteen to thirty-five stalks from each seed in consequence of this process! The harvest is reaped in April, after which water covers the land.

Another style of cultivation is adopted for land, of which we

saw a good deal, very low lying, and annually overflowed, usually surrounding a nucleus of permanent marsh. This land, after the water dries up, is destitute of vegetation, and presents a smooth, moist surface full of cracks, which scales off later. No scratching is needed for this soil. The seed is sown broadcast over it, and such of it as is not devoured by birds falls into the cracks, and produces an abundant crop. All this rich alluvial soil is stoneless, but is strewn from Seleucia to Babylon with fragments of glass, bricks, and pottery. Artificial mounds also abound, and remains of canals, all denoting that these fertile plains in ancient days supported a large stationary population. Of all that once was, this swirling river alone remains, singing in every eddy and ripple —

> "For men may come and men may go,
> But I go on for ever."

As we were writing in the evening we were nearly thrown off our chairs by running aground with a thump, which injured one paddle wheel and obliged us to lie up part of the night for repairs near the ruins of the ancient palace of Ctesiphon. Seleucia, on the right bank of the river, is little more now than a historic name, but the palace of Tak-i-Kasr, with its superb archway 100 feet in height, has been even in recent times magnificent enough in its ruin to recall the glories of the Parthian kings, and the days when, according to Gibbon, "Khosroes Nushirwan gave audience to the ambassadors of the world" within its stately walls. Its gaunt

and shattered remains have even still a mournful grandeur about them, but they have suffered so severely from the barbarous removal of the stones and the fall of much of the front as to be altogether disappointing.

Soon after leaving Ctesiphon there is increased cultivation, and within a few miles of Baghdad the banks of the river, which is its great high road, become populous. "Palatial residences," in which the women's apartments are indicated by the blankness of their walls, are mixed up with mud hovels and goat's-hair tents; there are large farmhouses with enclosures for cattle and horses; date gardens and orange groves fringe the stream, and arrangements for drawing water are let into its banks at frequent intervals. Strings of asses laden with country produce, companies of horsemen and innumerable foot passengers, all moved citywards.

The frosty sun rose out of an orange sky as a disc of blood and flame, but the morning became misty and overcast, so that the City of the Arabian Nights did not burst upon the view in any halo of splendour. A few tiled minarets, the blue domes of certain mosques, handsome houses, – some of them European Consulates, half hidden by orange groves laden with their golden fruitage, – a picturesque bridge of boats, a dense growth of palms on the right bank, beyond which gleam the golden domes of Kazimain and the top of Zobeide's tomb, the superannuated British gun-boat *Comet*, two steamers, a crowd of native craft, including *kufas* or *gophers*, a prominent Custom-house, and

decayed alleys opening on the water, make up the Baghdad of the present as seen from the *Mejidieh's* deck.

As soon as we anchored swarms of *kufas* clustered round us, and swarms of officials and *hamals* (porters) invaded the deck. Some of the passengers had landed two hours before, others had proceeded to their destinations at once, and as my friends had not come off I was alone for some time in the middle of a tremendous Babel, in which every man shouted at the top of his voice and all together, Hadji assuming a deportment of childish helplessness. Certain officials under cover of bribes lavished on my behalf by a man who spoke English professed to let my baggage pass unopened, then a higher official with a sword knocked Hadji down, then a man said that everything would be all right if I would bestow another gold *lira*, about £1, on the officers, and I was truly glad when kind Captain Dougherty with Dr. Sutton came alongside in the *Comet's* boat, and brought me ashore. The baggage was put into another of her boats, but as soon as we were out of sight it was removed, and was taken to the Custom-house, where they insisted that some small tent poles in a cover were guns, and smashed a box of dates in the idea that it was tobacco!

The Church Mission House, in which I am receiving hospitality, is a "native" house, though built and decorated by Persians, as also are several of the Consulates. It is in a narrow roadway with blank walls, a part of the European quarter; a door of much strength admits into a small courtyard, round which are some of the servants' quarters and reception rooms

for Moslem visitors, and within this again is a spacious and handsome courtyard, round which are kitchens, domestic offices, and the *serdabs*, which play an important part in Eastern life.

These *serdabs* are semi-subterranean rooms, usually with arched fronts, filled in above-ground with latticework. They are lofty, and their vaulted roofs are supported in rich men's houses on pillars. The well of the household is often found within. The general effect of this one is that of a crypt, and it was most appropriate for the Divine Service in English which greeted my arrival. The cold of it was, however, frightful. It was only when the Holy Communion was over that I found that I was wearing Hadji's revolver and cartridge belt under my cloak, which he had begged me to put on to save them from confiscation! In these vaulted chambers both Europeans and natives spend the hot season, sleeping at night on the roofs.

Above this lower floor are the winter apartments, which open upon a fine stone balcony running round three sides of the court. On the river side of the house there is an orange garden, which just now might be the garden of the Hesperides, and a terrace, below which is the noble, swirling Tigris, and beyond, a dark belt of palms. These rooms on the river front have large projecting windows, six in a row, with screens which slide up and down, and those which look to the courtyard are secluded by very beautiful fretwork. The drawing-room, used as a dormitory, is a superb room, in which exquisitely beautiful ceiling and wall decorations in shades of fawn enriched with gold, and fretwork windows,

suggest Oriental feeling at every turn. The plaster-work of this room is said to be distinctively Persian and is very charming. The house, though large, is inconveniently crowded, with the medical and clerical mission families, two lady missionaries, and two guests. Each apartment has two rows of vaulted recesses in its walls, and very fine cornices above. It is impossible to warm the rooms, but the winter is very short and brilliant, and after ulsters, greatcoats, and fur cloaks have been worn for breakfast, the sun mitigates the temperature.

I. L. B.

LETTER II

Baghdad, Jan. 9.

Baghdad is too well known from the careful descriptions given of it by Eastern travellers to justify me in lingering upon it in detail, and I will only record a few impressions, which are decidedly *couleur de rose*, for the weather is splendid, making locomotion a pleasure, and the rough, irregular roadways which at other seasons are deep in foul and choking dust, or in mud and pestilential slime, are now firm and not remarkably dirty.

A little earlier than this the richer inhabitants, who have *warstled* through the summer in their dim and latticed *serdabs*, emerge and pitch their tents in the plains of Ctesiphon, where the men find a stimulating amusement in hunting the boar, but it is now the "season" in the city, the liveliest and busiest time of the year. The cholera, which is believed to have claimed 6000 victims, has departed, and the wailing of the women, which scarcely ceased day or night for a month, is silent. The Jewish troubles, which apparently rose out of the indignation of the Moslems at the burial within the gates, contrary to a strict edict on the subject, of a Rabbi who died of cholera, have subsided, and the motley populations and their yet more motley creeds are for the time at peace.

In the daytime there is a roar or hum of business, mingled with

braying of asses, squeals of belligerent horses, yells of camel-drivers and muleteers, beating of drums, shouts of beggars, hoarse-toned ejaculations of fakirs, ear-splitting snatches of discordant music, and in short a chorus of sounds unfamiliar to Western ears, but the nights are so still that the swirl of the Tigris as it hurries past is distinctly heard. Only the long melancholy call to prayer, or the wail of women over the dead, or the barking of dogs, breaks the silence which at sunset falls as a pall over Baghdad.

Under the blue sunny sky the river view is very fine. The river itself is imposing from its breadth and volume, and in the gorgeous sunsets, with a sky of crimson flame, and the fronds of the dark date palms mirrored in its reddened waters, it looks really beautiful. The city is stately enough as far as the general *coup-d'œil* of the river front goes, and its river *façade* agreeably surprises me. The Tigris, besides being what may be called the main street, divides Baghdad into two unequal parts, and though the city on the left bank has almost a monopoly of picturesque and somewhat stately irregularity in the houses of fair height, whose lattices and oriel windows overhang the stream from an environment of orange gardens, the dark date groves dignify the meaner buildings of the right bank. The rush of a great river is in itself attractive, and from the roof of this house the view is fascinating, with the ceaseless movements of hundreds of boats and *kufas*, the constant traffic of men, horses, asses, and caravans across the great bridge of boats, and the long lines of buildings

which with more or less picturesqueness line the great waterway.

Without the wearisomeness of sight-seeing there is much to be seen in Baghdad, and though much that would be novel to a new-comer from the West is familiar to me after two years of Eastern travel, there is a great deal that is really interesting. The *kufas* accumulating at their landing, freighted with the products of the Upper Tigris, the transpontine city, in which country produce takes the foremost place; the tramway to Kazimain constructed during the brief valiship of Midhat Pasha, on which the last journey of the day is always performed at a gallop, *coûte que coûte*; the caravans of asses, each one with a huge fish, the "Fish of Tobias," hanging across its back; the strings of the same humble animal, carrying skins of water from the river throughout the city; the tombs, the mosques, the churches, the great caravans of mules and camels, almost monopolising the narrow roadways, Arabs and Osmanlis on showy horses, Persians, Turks, Arabs, Jews, Armenians, Chaldæans, in all the variety of their picturesque national costumes, to which the niggardly clothing of a chance European acts as an ungraceful foil; Persian dead, usually swaddled, making their last journey on mule or horseback to the holy ground at Kerbela, and the occasional march of horse or foot through the thronged bazars, are among the hourly sights of a city on which European influence is scarcely if at all perceptible.

Turkish statistics must be received with caution, and the population of Baghdad may not reach 120,000 souls, but it has

obviously recovered wonderfully from the effects of war, plague, inundation, and famine, and looks busy and fairly prosperous, so much so indeed that the account given of its misery and decay in Mr. Baillie Fraser's charming *Travels in Kurdistan* reads like a story of the last century. If nothing remains of the glories of the city of the Caliphs, it is certainly for Turkey a busy, growing, and passably wealthy nineteenth-century capital. It is said to have a hundred mosques, twenty-six minarets, and fifteen domes, but I have not counted them!

Its bazars, which many people regard as the finest in the East outside of Stamboul, are of enormous extent and very great variety. Many are of brick, with well-built domed roofs, and sides arcaded both above and below, and are wide and airy. Some are of wood, all are covered, and admit light scantily, only from the roof. Those which supply the poorer classes are apt to be ruinous and squalid – "*ramshackle*," to say the truth, with an air of decay about them, and their roofs are merely rough timber, roughly thatched with reeds or date tree fronds. Of splendour there is none anywhere, and of cleanliness there are few traces. The old, narrow, and filthy bazars in which the gold and silversmiths ply their trade are of all the most interesting. The trades have their separate localities, and the buyer who is in search of cotton goods, silk stuffs, carpets, cotton yarn, gold and silver thread, ready-made clothing, weapons, saddlery, rope, fruit, meat, grain, fish, jewellery, muslins, copper pots, etc., has a whole alley of contiguous shops devoted to the sale of the same article to choose

from.

At any hour of daylight at this season progress through the bazars is slow. They are crowded, and almost entirely with men. It is only the poorer women who market for themselves, and in twos and threes, at certain hours of the day. In a whole afternoon, among thousands of men, I saw only five women, tall, shapeless, badly-made-up bundles, carried mysteriously along, rather by high, loose, canary-yellow leather boots than by feet. The face is covered with a thick black gauze mask, or cloth, and the head and remainder of the form with a dark blue or black sheet, which is clutched by the hand below the nose. The walk is one of tottering decrepitude. All the business transacted in the bazars is a matter of bargaining, and as Arabs shout at the top of their voices, and buyers and sellers are equally keen, the roar is tremendous.

Great *cafés*, as in Cairo, occur frequently. In the larger ones from a hundred to two hundred men are seen lounging at one time on the broad matted seats, shouting, chaffering, drinking coffee or *sharbat* and smoking *chibouks* or *kalians*. Negro attendants supply their wants. These *cafés* are the clubs of Baghdad. Whatever of public opinion exists in a country where the recognised use of words is to "conceal thought," is formed in them. They are centres of business likewise, and much of the noise is due to bargaining, and they are also manufactories of rumours, scandals, and fanaticism. The great caravanserais, such as the magnificent Khan Othman, are also resorts of merchants for the display and sale of their goods.

Europeans never make purchases in the bazars. They either have the goods from which they wish to make a choice brought to their houses, or their servants bargain for them, getting a commission both from buyer and seller.

The splendour of the East, if it exists at all, is not to be seen in the bazars. The jewelled daggers, the cloth of silver and gold, the diaphanous silk tissues, the brocaded silks, the rich embroideries, the damascened sword blades, the finer carpets, the inlaid armour, the cunning work in brass and inlaid bronze, and all the articles of *vertu* and *bric-à-brac* of real or spurious value, are carefully concealed by their owners, and are carried for display, with much secrecy and mystery, to the houses of their ordinary customers, and to such European strangers as are reported to be willing to be victimised.

Trade in Baghdad is regarded by Europeans and large capitalists as growing annually more depressed and unsatisfactory, but this is not the view of the small traders, chiefly Jews and Christians, who start with a capital of £5 or upwards, and by buying some cheap lot in Bombay, – gay handkerchiefs, perfumery, shoes, socks, buttons, tin boxes with mirror lids, scissors, pocket-knives, toys, and the like, – bid fair to make small fortunes. The amount of perfumery and rubbish piled in these ramshackle shops is wonderful. The trader who picks up a desert Arab for a customer and sells him a knife, or a mirror box, or a packet of candles is likely to attract to himself a large trade, for when once the unmastered pastoral hordes of Al Jazīra,

Trak, and Stramīya see such objects, the desire of possession is aroused, and the refuse of Manchester and Birmingham will find its way into every tent in the desert.

The best bazars are the least crowded, though once in them it is difficult to move, and the strings of asses laden with skins of water are a great nuisance. The foot-passenger is also liable at any moment to be ridden down by horsemen, or squeezed into a jelly by the passage of caravans.

It is in the meat, vegetable, cotton, oil, grain, fruit, and fish bazars that the throngs are busiest and noisiest, and though cucumbers, the great joy of the Turkish palate, are over, vegetables "of sorts" are abundant, and the slant, broken sunbeams fall on pyramids of fruit, and glorify the warm colouring of melons, apples, and pomegranates.

A melon of 10 lbs. weight can be got for a penny, a sheep for five or six shillings, and fish for something like a farthing per pound, that is the "Fish of Tobias," the monster of the Tigris waters, which is largely eaten by the poor. Poultry and game are also very cheap, and the absolute necessaries of life, such as broken wheat for porridge, oil, flour, and cheese, cost little.

Cook-shops abound, but their viands are not tempting, and the bazars are pervaded by a pungent odour of hot sesamum oil and rancid fat, frying being a usual mode of cooking in these restaurants. An impassive Turk, silently smoking, sits cross-legged on a platform at each Turkish shop door. He shows his goods as if he had no interest in them, and whether he sells or

not seems a matter of indifference, so that he can return to his pipe. It is not to him that the overpowering din is owing, but to the agitated eagerness of the other nationalities.

The charm of the bazars lies in the variety of race and costume and in the splendid *physique* of the greater number of the men. The European looks "nowhere." The natural look of a Moslem is one of *hauteur*, but no words can describe the scorn and lofty Pharisaism which sit on the faces of the Seyyids, the descendants of Mohammed, whose hands and even garments are kissed reverently as they pass through the crowd; or the wrathful melancholy mixed with pride which gives a fierceness to the dignified bearing of the magnificent beings who glide through the streets, their white turbans or shawl head-gear, their gracefully flowing robes, their richly embroidered under-vests, their Kashmir girdles, their inlaid pistols, their silver-hilted dirks, and the predominance of red throughout their clothing aiding the general effect. Yet most of these grand creatures, with their lofty looks and regal stride, would be accessible to a bribe, and would not despise even a perquisite. These are the *mollahs*, the scribes, the traders, and the merchants of the city.

The Bedouin and the city Arabs dress differently, and are among the marked features of the streets. The under-dress is a very coarse shirt of unbleached homespun cotton, rarely clean, over which the Sheikhs and richer men wear a robe of striped silk or cotton with a Kashmir girdle of a shawl pattern in red on a white ground. The poor wear shirts of coarse hair or cotton,

without a robe. The invariable feature of Arab dress is the *abba*– a long cloak, sleeveless, but with holes through which to pass the arms, and capable of many adaptations. It conceals all superabundance and deficiency of attire, and while it has the dignity of the *toga* by day it has the utility of a blanket by night. The better-class *abba* is very hard, being made of closely-woven worsted, in broad brown and white or black and white perpendicular stripes. The poorest *abba* is of coarse brown worsted, and even of goat's-hair. I saw many men who were destitute of any clothing but tattered *abbas* tied round their waists by frayed hair ropes. The *abba* is the distinctive national costume of the Arabs. The head-gear is not the turban but a shawl of very thick silk woven in irregular stripes of yellow and red, with long cords and tassels depending, made of the twisted woof. This handsome square is doubled triangularly, the double end hangs down the back, and the others over the shoulders. A loosely-twisted rope of camel's-hair is wound several times round the crown of the head. When the weather is cold, being like all Orientals very sensitive in their heads, they bring one side of the shawl over the whole of the face but the eyes, and tuck it in, in great cold only exposing one eye, and in great heat also. Most Moslems shave the head, but the Arabs let their hair grow very long, and wear it in a number of long plaits, and these elf-locks mixed up with the long coloured tassels of the *kiffiyeh*, and the dark glittering eyes looking out from under the yellow silk, give them an appearance of extreme wildness, aided by the long guns

which they carry and their long desert stride.

The Arab moves as if he were the ruler of the country, though the grip of the Osmanli may be closing on him. His eyes are deeply set under shaggy eyebrows, his nose is high and sharp, he is long and thin, his profile suggests a bird of prey, and his demeanour a fierce independence.

The Arab women go about the streets unveiled, and with the *abba* covering their very poor clothing, but it is not clutched closely enough to conceal the extraordinary tattooing which the Bedouin women everywhere regard as ornamental. There are artists in Baghdad who make their living by this mode of decorating the person, and vie with each other in the elaboration of their patterns. I saw several women tattooed with two wreaths of blue flowers on their bosoms linked by a blue chain, palm fronds on the throat, stars on the brow and chin, and bands round the wrists and ankles. These disfigurements, and large gold or silver filigree buttons placed outside one nostril by means of a wire passed through it, worn by married women, are much admired. When these women sell country produce in the markets, they cover their heads with the ordinary *chadar*.

The streets are narrow, and the walls, which are built of fire-burned bricks, are high. Windows to the streets are common, and the oriel windows, with their warm brown lattices projecting over the roadways at irregular heights, are strikingly picturesque. Not less so are latticework galleries, which are often thrown across the street to connect the two houses of wealthy residents, and

the sitting-rooms with oriel windows, which likewise bridge the roadways. Solid doorways with iron-clasped and iron-studded doors give an impression of security, and suggest comfort and to some extent home life, and sprays of orange trees, hanging over walls, and fronds of date palms give an aspect of pleasantness to the courtyards.

The best parts of the city, where the great bazars, large dwelling-houses, and most of the mosques are, is surrounded by a labyrinth of alleys, fringing off into streets growing meaner till they cease altogether among open spaces, given up to holes, heaps, rubbish, the slaughter of animals, and in some favoured spots to the production of vegetables. Then come the walls, which are of kiln-burned bricks, and have towers intended for guns at intervals. The wastes within the walls have every element of decay and meanness, the wastes without, where the desert sands sweep up to the very foot of the fortifications, have many elements of grandeur.

Baghdad is altogether built of chrome-yellow kiln-dried bricks. There are about twenty-five kilns, chiefly in the hands of Jews and Christians in the wastes outside the city, but the demand exceeds the supply, not for building only, but for the perpetual patchings which houses, paths, and walls are always requiring, owing to the absorption of moisture in the winter.

Bricks at the kilns sell for 36s. per thousand twelve inches square, and 18s. per thousand seven inches square. They are carried from the kilns on donkeys, small beasts, each taking ten

large or twenty-five small bricks.

Unskilled labour is abundant. Men can be engaged at 9d. a day, and boys for 5d.

This afternoon, in the glory of a sunset which reddened the yellow waste up to the distant horizon, a caravan of mules, mostly in single file, approached the city. Each carried two or four white bales slung on his sides, or two or more long boxes, consisting of planks roped rather than nailed together. This is the fashion in which thousands of Persian Moslems (Shiahs or "Sectaries") have been conveyed for ages for final burial at Kerbela, the holiest place of the Shiahs, an easy journey from Baghdad, where rest the ashes of Ali, regarded as scarcely second to Mohammed, and of Houssein and Hassan his sons, whose "martyrdom" is annually commemorated by a Passion Play which is acted in every town and village in Persia. To make a pilgrimage to Kerbela, or to rest finally in its holy dust, or both, constitutes the ambition of every Shiah. The Sunnis, or "Orthodox," who hate the Shiahs, are so far kept in check that these doleful caravans are not exposed to any worse molestation than the shouts and ridicule of street Arabs.

The mode of carrying the dead is not reverent. The *katirgis*, who contract for the removal, hurry the bodies along as goods, and pile them in the yards of the caravanserais at night, and the mournful journey is performed, oftener than not, without the presence of relations, each body being ticketed with the name once borne by its owner. Some have been exhumed and are

merely skeletons, others are in various stages of decomposition, and some are of the newly dead.[6]

Outside the walls predatory Arabs render the roads unsafe for solitary travellers, and at times for feeble caravans; but things in this respect are better than they were.

Visits to the Armenian and Chaldæan Churches, to the Mosque of Abdel Kader, with its courts thronged by Afghan pilgrims, and to the Jewish quarter, have been very interesting. There are said to be 30,000 Jews here, and while a large proportion of them are in poverty, on the whole they are an influential nationality, and some of them are very rich.

Through the liberality of Sir Albert Sassoon a Jewish High School has been opened, where an admirable education is given. I was extremely pleased with it, and with the director, who speaks French fluently, and with the proficiency in French of the elder students. He describes their earnestness and energetic application as being most remarkable.

The French Carmelite monks have a large, solid "Mission Church" or Cathedral with a fine peal of bells, and a very prosperous school attached, in which are boys belonging to all the many creeds professed in Baghdad. The sisters of St. Joseph have a school for girls, which Turkish children are not slow to avail themselves of. The sisters find a remarkable unhandiness

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[6] I heard that the Shah had prohibited this "Dead March" to Kerbela, on account of the many risks to the public health involved in it, but nearly a year later, in Persian Kurdistan, I met, besides thousands of living pilgrims, a large caravan of the dead.

among the women. Few, if any, among them have any idea of cutting out or repairing, and rich and poor are equally incapable of employing their fingers usefully.

The people here are so used to the sight of Europeans that it is quite easy for foreign ladies to walk in this quarter only attended by a servant, and I have accompanied Mrs. Sutton on visits to several Armenian houses. The Armenians are in many cases wealthy, as their admirably-designed and well-built houses testify. The Christian population is estimated at 5000, and its wealth and energy give it greater importance than its numbers warrant. One of the houses which we visited was truly beautiful and in very good taste, the solidity of the stone and brickwork, the finish of the wood, and the beauty of the designs and their execution in hammered iron being quite remarkable. The lofty roofs and cornices are elaborately worked in plaster, and this is completely concealed by hundreds or thousands of mirrors set so as to resemble facets, so that roof and cornices flash like diamonds. This is a Persian style of decoration, and is extremely effective in large handsome rooms. Superb carpets and divans and tea tables inlaid with mother-of-pearl furnish the reception and smoking rooms, and the bedrooms and nurseries over which we were taken were simply arranged with French bedsteads and curtains of Nottingham mosquito net. As in other Eastern houses, there were no traces of occupation, no morning room or den sacred to litter; neither was there anything to look at – the opposite extreme from our overloaded drawing-rooms – or any

library. Cigarettes and black coffee in minute porcelain cups, in gold filigree receptacles, were presented on each occasion, and the kind and courteous intention was very pleasing.

The visits which I paid with Dr. Sutton were very different. He has worked as a medical missionary here for some years, and his unaffected benevolence and quiet attention to all suffering persons, without distinction of race or creed, and his recent extraordinary labours by night and day among the cholera-smitten people, have won for him general esteem and confidence, and he is even allowed to enter Moslem houses and prescribe for the women in some cases.

The dispensary, in which there is not half enough accommodation, is very largely attended by people of all creeds, and even Moslem women, though exclusively of the poorer classes, avail themselves of it. Yesterday, when I was there, the comfortable seats of the cheerful matted waiting-room were all occupied by Armenian and Chaldæan women, unveiled and speaking quite freely to Dr. Sutton; while a few Moslem women, masked rather than veiled, and enveloped in black sheets, cowered on the floor and scarcely let their voices be heard even in a tremulous whisper.

I am always sorry to see any encroachment made by Christian teachers on national customs where they are not contrary to morality, and willingly leave to Eastern women the *pardah* and the veil, but still there is a wholesomeness about the unveiled, rosy, comely, frank faces of these Christian women. But – and it

is a decided but – though the women were comely, and though some of the Armenian girls are beautiful, every one has one or more flattish depressions on her face – scars in fact – the size of a large date stone. Nearly the whole population is thus disfigured. So universal is it among the fair-skinned Armenian girls, that so far from being regarded as a blemish, it is viewed as a token of good health, and it is said that a young man would hesitate to ask for the hand of a girl in marriage if she had not a "date mark" on her face.

These "date boils," or "Baghdad boils," as they are sometimes called, are not slow in attacking European strangers, and few, if any, escape during their residence here. As no cause can reasonably be assigned for them, so no cure has been found. Various remedies, including cauterisation, have been tried, but without success, and it is now thought wisest to do nothing more than keep them dry and clean, and let them run their natural course, which lasts about a year. Happily they are not so painful as ordinary boils. The malady appears at first as a white point, not larger than a pin's head, and remains thus for about three months. Then the flesh swells, becomes red and hard and suppurates, and underneath a rough crust which is formed is corroded and eaten away as by vitriol. On some strangers the fatal point appears within a few days of their arrival.

In two years in the East I have not seen any European welcomed so cordially as Dr. Sutton into Moslem homes. The *Hakīm*, exhibiting in "quiet continuance in well-doing" the

legible and easily-recognised higher fruits of Christianity, while refraining from harsh and irreverent onslaughts on the creeds of those whose sufferings he mitigates, is everywhere blessed.[7]

To my thinking, no one follows in the Master's footprints so closely as the medical missionary, and on no agency for alleviating human suffering can one look with more unqualified satisfaction. The medical mission is the outcome of the living teachings of our faith. I have now visited such missions in many parts of the world, and never saw one which was not healing, helping, blessing; softening prejudice, diminishing suffering, making an end of many of the cruelties which proceed from ignorance, restoring sight to the blind, limbs to the crippled, health to the sick, telling, in every work of love and of consecrated skill, of the infinite compassion of Him who came "not to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

In one house Dr. Sutton was welcome because he had saved a woman's life, in another because a blind youth had received his sight, and so on. Among our visits was one to a poor Moslem family in a very poor quarter. No matter how poor the people are, their rooms stand back from the street, and open on yards more or less mean. It is a misnomer to call this dwelling a house, or to write that it *opens*, for it is merely an arched recess which can never be shut!

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[7] Six months later a Bakhtiari chief, a bigoted Moslem, said to me at the conclusion of an earnest plea for European medical advice, "Yes, Jesus was a great prophet; *send us a Hakīm in His likeness*," and doubtless the nearer that likeness is the greater is the success.

In a hole in the middle of an uneven earthen floor there was a fire of tamarisk root and animal fuel, giving off a stinging smoke. On this the broken wheat porridge for supper was being cooked in a copper pot, supported on three rusty cannon-balls. An earthenware basin, a wooden spoon, a long knife, a goat-skin of water, a mallet, a long hen-coop, which had served as the bed for the wife when she was ill, some ugly hens, a clay jar full of grain, two heaps of brick rubbish, and some wadded quilts, which had taken on the prevailing gray-brown colour, were the plenishings of the arch.

Poverty brings one blessing in Turkey – the poor man is of necessity a monogamist. Wretched though the place was, it had the air of home, and the smoky hole in the floor was a fireside. The wife was unveiled and joined in the conversation, the husband was helping her to cook the supper, and the children were sitting round or scrambling over their parents' knees. All looked as happy as people in their class anywhere. It is good to have ocular demonstration that such homes exist in Turkey. God be thanked for them! The man, a fine frank-looking Turk, welcomed Dr. Sutton jovially. He had saved the wife's life and was received as their best friend. Who indeed but the medical missionary would care for such as them and give them of his skill "without money and without price"? The hearty laugh of this Turk was good to hear, his wife smiled cordially, and the boys laughed like their father. The eldest, a nice, bright fellow of nine, taught in the mosque school, was proud to show how well

he could read Arabic, and read part of a chapter from St. John's Gospel, his parents looking on with wonder and admiration.

Among the Christian families we called on were those of the dispenser and catechist – people with very small salaries but comfortable homes. These families were living in a house furnished like those of the rich Armenians, but on a very simple scale, the floor and daïs covered with Persian carpets, the divan with Turkish woollen stuff, and there were in addition a chair or two, and silk cushions on the floor. In one room there were an intelligent elderly woman, a beautiful girl of seventeen, married a few days ago, and wearing her bridal ornaments, with her husband; another man and his wife, and two bright, ruddy-cheeked boys who spoke six languages. All had "date marks" on their faces. After a year among Moslems and Hindus, it was startling to find men and women sitting together, the women unveiled, and taking their share in the conversation merrily and happily. Even the young bride took the initiative in talking to Dr. Sutton.

Of course the Christian women cover their faces in the streets, but the covering is of different material and arrangement, and is really magnificent, being of very rich, stiff, corded silk – self-coloured usually – black, heliotrope, or dark blue, with a contrasting colour woven in deep vandykes upon a white ground as a border. The silk is superb, really capable of standing on end with richness. Such a sheet costs about £5. The ambition of every woman is to possess one, and to gratify it she even denies herself

in the necessaries of life.

The upper classes of both Moslem and Christian women are rarely seen on foot in the streets except on certain days, as when they visit the churches and the mosques and burial-grounds. Nevertheless they go about a great deal to visit each other, riding on white asses, which are also used by *mollahs* and rich elderly merchants. All asses have their nostrils slit to improve their wind. A good white ass of long pedigree, over thirteen hands high, costs as much as £50. As they are groomed till they look as white as snow, and are caparisoned with red leather trappings embroidered with gold thread and silks, and as a rider on a white ass is usually preceded by runners who shout and brandish sticks to clear the way, this animal always suggests position, or at least wealth.

Women of the upper classes mounted on these asses usually go to pay afternoon visits in companies, with mounted eunuchs and attendants, and men to clear the way. They ride astride with short stirrups, but the rider is represented only by a shapeless blue bundle, out of which protrude two yellow boots. Blacks of the purest negro type frequently attend on women, and indeed consequence is shown by the possession of a number of them.

Of the Georgian and Circassian *belles* of the harams, a single lustrous eye with its brilliancy enhanced by the use of *kohl* is all that one sees. At the bottom of the scale are the Arab women and the unsecluded women of the lower orders generally, who are of necessity drudges, and are old hags before they are twenty,

except in the few cases in which they do not become mothers, when the good looks which many of them possess in extreme youth last a little longer. If one's memories of Baghdad women were only of those to be seen in the streets, they would be of leathery, wrinkled faces, prematurely old, figures which have lost all shape, and henna-stained hands crinkled and deformed by toil.

Baghdad is busy and noisy with traffic. Great quantities of British goods pass through it to Persia, avoiding by doing so the horrible rock ladders between Bushire and Isfahan. The water transit from England and India, only involving the inconvenience of transhipment at Basrah, makes Baghdad practically into a seaport, with something of the bustle and vivacity of a seaport, and caravans numbering from 20,000 to 26,000 laden mules are employed in the carriage of goods to and from the Persian cities. A duty of one per cent is levied on goods in transit to Persia.[8]

The trade of Baghdad is not to be despised. The principal articles which were imported from Europe amounted in 1889 to a value of £621,140, and from India to £239,940, while the exports from Baghdad to Europe and America were valued in the

[8] The entire trade of Baghdad is estimated at about £2,500,000, of which the Persian transit trade is nearly a quarter. The Persian imports and exports through Baghdad are classified thus: Manufactured goods, including Manchester piece goods, and continental woollens and cottons, 7000 to 8000 loads. Indian manufactures, 1000 loads. Loaf sugar, chiefly from Marseilles, 6000 loads. Drugs, pepper, coffee, tea, other sugars, indigo, cochineal, copper, and spelter, 7000 loads. The Persian exports for despatch by sea include wool, opium, cotton, carpets, gum, and dried fruits, and for local consumption, among others, tobacco, *roghan* (clarified butter), and dried and fresh fruits, with a probable bulk of from 12,000 to 15,000 loads.

same year at £469,200, and to India by British India Company steamers only at £35,150. In looking through the Consular list of exports, it is interesting to notice that 13,400 cwts. of gum of the value of £70,000 were exported in 1889. Neither the Indian postage stamps nor ours should suffer from the partial failure of the Soudan supply.

Liquorice roots to the value of £7800 were exported in 1888, almost solely to America, to be used in the preparation of quid tobacco and "fancy drinks"!

The gall nuts which grow in profusion on the dwarf oaks which cover many hillsides, were exported last year to the value of £35,000, to be used chiefly in the production of ink, so closely is commerce binding countries one to the other.

Two English firms have concessions for pressing wool and making it into bales suitable for shipment. There are five principal English firms here, three French, and six Turkish, not including the small fry. There are five foreign Consulates.

The carriage of goods is one of the most important of Persian and Turkish industries, and the breeding of mules and the manufacture of caravan equipments give extensive employment; but one shudders to think of the amount of suffering involved in sore backs and wounds, and of exhausted and over-weighted animals lying down forlornly to die, having their eyes picked out before death.

The mercury was at 37° at breakfast-time this morning. Fuel is scarce and dear, some of the rooms are without fireplaces,

and these good people study, write, and work cheerfully in this temperature in open rooms, untouched by the early sun.

The preparations for to-morrow's journey are nearly complete. Three mules have been engaged for the baggage – one for Hadji, and a saddle mule for myself; stores, a revolver, and a *mangel* or brazier have been bought; a permit to travel has been obtained, and my hosts, with the most thoughtful kindness, have facilitated all the arrangements. I have bought two mule *yekdans*, which are tall, narrow leather trunks on strong iron frames, with stout straps to buckle over the top of the pack saddle. On the whole I find that it is best to adopt as far as possible the travelling equipments of the country in which one travels. The muleteers and servants understand them better, and if any thing goes wrong, or wears out, it can be repaired or replaced. I have given away *en route* nearly all the things I brought from England, and have reduced my camp furniture to a folding bed and a chair. I shall start with three novelties – a fellow-traveller,[9] a saddle mule, and an untried saddle.

It is expected that the journey will be a very severe one, owing to the exceptionally heavy snowfall reported from the Zagros mountains and the Persian plateau. The Persian post has arrived several days late. I. L. B.

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[9] I had given up the idea of travelling in Persia, and was preparing to leave India for England, when an officer, with whom I was then unacquainted, and who was about to proceed to Tihran on business, kindly offered me his escort. The journey turned out one of extreme hardship and difficulty, and had it not been for his kindness and efficient help I do not think that I should have accomplished it.

LETTER III[10]

Yakobiyeh, Asiatic Turkey, Jan. 11.

Whether for "well or ill" the journey to Tihran is begun. I am ashamed to say that I had grown so nervous about its untried elements, and about the possibilities of the next two months, that a very small thing would have made me give it up at the last moment; but now that I am fairly embarked upon it in splendid weather, the spirit of travel has returned.

Much remained for the last morning, – debts to be paid in complicated money, for Indian, Turkish, and Persian coins are all current here; English circular notes to be turned into difficult coin, and the usual "row" with the muleteers to be endured. This disagreeable farce attends nearly all departures in the East, and I never feel the comfortable assurance that it means nothing.

The men weighed my baggage, which was considerably under weight, the day before, but yesterday three or four of them came into the courtyard, shouting in Arabic at the top of their loud harsh voices that they would not carry the loads. Hadji roared at them, loading his revolver all the time, calling them "sons of burnt fathers," and other choice names. Dr. Bruce and Dr. Sutton

[10] I present my diary letters much as they were written, believing that the details of travel, however wearisome to the experienced traveller, will be interesting to the "Untravelled Many," to whom these volumes are dedicated.

reasoned with them from the balcony, when, in the very height of the row, they suddenly shouldered the loads and went off with them.

Two hours later the delightful hospitalities of Dr. and Mrs. Sutton were left behind, and the farewell to the group in the courtyard of the mission house is a long farewell to civilisation. Rumours of difficulties have been rife, and among the various dismal prophecies the one oftenest repeated is that we shall be entangled in the snows of the Zagros mountains; but the journey began propitiously among oranges and palms, bright sunshine and warm good wishes. My mule turns out a fine, spirited, fast-walking animal, and the untried saddle suits me. My marching equipment consists of two large holsters, with a revolver and tea-making apparatus in one, and a bottle of milk, and dates in the other. An Afghan sheepskin coat is strapped to the front of the saddle, and a blanket and stout mackintosh behind. I wear a cork sun-helmet, a gray mask instead of a veil, an American mountain dress with a warm jacket over it, and tan boots, scarcely the worse for a year of Himalayan travel. Hadji is dressed like a wild Ishmaelite.

Captain Dougherty of H.M.S. *Comet* and his chief engineer piloted us through the narrow alleys and thronged bazars, – a *zaptieh*, or gendarme, with a rifle across his saddle-bow, and a sheathed sabre in his hand, shouting at the donkey boys, and clearing the crowd to right and left. Through the twilight of the bazars, where chance rays of sunshine fell on warm colouring,

gay merchandise, and picturesque crowds; along narrow alleys, overhung by brown lattice windows; out under the glorious blue of heaven among ruins and graves, through the northern gateway, and then there was an abrupt exchange of the roar and limitations of the City of the Caliphs for the silence of the desert and the brown sweep of a limitless horizon. A walled Eastern city has no suburbs. It is a literal step from a crowded town to absolute solitude. The contrast is specially emphasised at Baghdad, where the transition is made from a great commercial city with a crowded waterway, to an uninhabited plain in the nudity of mid-winter.

A last look at gleaming domes, coloured minarets, and massive mausoleums, rising out of an environment of palms and orange groves, at the brick walls and towers of the city, at the great gate to which lines of caravans were converging from every quarter, a farewell to the kindly pilots, and the journey began in earnest.

The "Desert" sweeps up to the walls of Baghdad, but it is a misnomer to call the vast level of rich, stoneless, alluvial soil a desert. It is a dead flat of uninhabited earth; orange colocynth balls, a little wormwood, and some alkaline plants which camels eat, being its chief products. After the inundations reedy grass grows in the hollows. It is a waste rather than a desert, and was once a populous plain, and the rich soil only needs irrigation to make it "blossom as the rose." Traces of the splendid irrigation system under which it was once a garden abound along the route.

The mid-day and afternoon were as glorious as an unclouded sky, a warm sun, and a fresh, keen air could make them. The desert freedom was all around, and the nameless charm of a nomadic life. The naked plain, which stretched to the horizon, was broken only by the brown tents of Arabs, mixed up with brown patches of migrating flocks, strings of brown camels, straggling caravans, and companies of Arab horsemen heavily armed. An expanse of dried mud, the mirage continually seen, a cloudless sky, and a brilliant sun – this was all. I felt better at once in the pure, exhilarating desert air, and nervousness about the journey was left behind. I even indulged in a gallop, and except for her impetuosity, which carried me into the middle of a caravan, and turning round a few times, the mule behaved so irreproachably that I forgot the potential possibilities of evil. Still, I do not think that there can ever be that perfect correspondence of will between a mule and his rider that there is between a horse and his rider.

The mirage was almost continual and grossly deceptive. Fair blue lakes appeared with palms and towers mirrored on their glassy surfaces, giving place to snowy ranges with bright waters at their feet, fringed by tall trees, changing into stately processions, all so absolutely real that the real often seemed the delusion. These deceptions, continued for several hours, were humiliating and exasperating.

Towards evening the shams disappeared, the waste purpled as the sun sank, and after riding fifteen miles we halted near the

mud village of Orta Khan, a place with brackish water and no supplies but a little brackish sheep's milk. The caravanserai was abominable, and we rode on to a fine gravelly camping-ground, but the headman and some of the villagers came out, and would not hear of our pitching the tents where we should be the prey of predatory hordes, strong enough, they said, to overpower an officer, two *zaptiehs*, and three orderlies! Being unwilling to get them into trouble, we accepted a horrible camping-ground, a mud-walled "garden," trenched for dates, and lately irrigated, as damp and clayey as it could be. My *dhurrie* will not be dry again this winter. The mules could not get in, the baggage was unloaded at some distance, and was all mixed up, and Hadji showed himself incapable; my tent fell twice, remained precarious, and the *kanats* were never pegged down at all.

The *dhurrie* was trampled into the mud by clayey feet. Baggage had to be disentangled and unpacked after dark, and the confusion apt to prevail on the first night of a march was something terrible. It opened my eyes to the thorough inefficiency of Hadji, who was so dazed with opium this morning that he stood about in a dream, ejaculating "*Ya Allah!*" when it was suggested that he should bestir himself, leaving me to do all the packing, groaning as he took up the tent pegs, and putting on the mule's bridle with the bit hanging under her chin!

The night was very damp, not quite frosty, and in the dim morning the tent and its contents were wet. Tea at seven, with Baghdad rusks, with a distinctly "native taste," two hours spent

in standing about on the damp, clayey ground till my feet were numb, while the men, most of whom were complaining of rheumatism, stumbled through their new work; and then five hours of wastes, enlivened by caravans of camels, mules, horses, or asses, and sometimes of all mixed, with their wild, armed drivers. The leader of each caravan carries a cylinder-shaped bell under his throat, suspended from a red leather band stitched with cowries, another at his chest, and very large ones, often twenty-four inches long by ten in diameter, hanging from each pack. Every other animal of the caravan has smaller bells, and the tones, which are often most musical, reach from the deep note of a church bell up to the frivolous jingle of sleigh bells; jingle often becomes jangle when several caravans are together. The *katirgis* (muleteers) spend large sums on the bells and other decorations. Among the loads we met or overtook were paraffin, oranges, pomegranates, carpets, cotton goods, melons, grain, and chopped straw. The waste is covered with tracks, and a guide is absolutely necessary.

The day has been still and very gloomy, with flakes of snow falling at times. The passing over rich soil, once cultivated and populous, now abandoned to the antelope and partridge, is most melancholy. The remains of canals and water-courses, which in former days brought the waters of the Tigris and the Diyalah into the fields of the great grain-growing population of these vast levels of Chaldæa and Mesopotamia, are everywhere, and at times create difficulties on the road. By road is simply meant a

track of greater or less width, trodden on the soil by the passage of caravans for ages. On these two marches not a stone has been seen which could strike a ploughshare.

Great ancient canals, with their banks in ruins and their deep beds choked up and useless, have been a mournful feature of rather a dismal day's journey. We crossed the bed of the once magnificent Nahrwan canal, the finest of the ancient irrigation works to the east of the Tigris, still in many places from twenty-five to forty feet deep and from 150 to 200 feet in breadth.

For many miles the only permanent village is a collection of miserable mud hovels round a forlorn caravanserai, in which travellers may find a wretched refuge from the vicissitudes of weather. There is a remarkable lack of shelter and provender, considering that this is not only one of the busiest of caravan routes, but is enormously frequented by Shiah pilgrims on their way from Persia to the shrines of Kerbela.

After crossing the Nahrwan canal the road keeps near the right bank of the Diyalah, a fine stream, which for a considerable distance runs parallel with the Tigris at a distance of from ten to thirty miles from it, and falls into it below Baghdad; and *imamzadas* and villages with groves of palms break the line of the horizon, while on the left bank for fully two miles are contiguous groves of dates and pomegranates. These groves are walled, and among them this semi-decayed and ruinous town is situated, miserably shrunk from its former proportions. We entered Yakobiyeh after crossing the Diyalah by a pontoon bridge

of twelve boats, and found one good house with projecting lattice windows, and a large entrance over which the head and ears of a hare were nailed; narrow, filthy lanes, a covered bazar, very dark and ruinous, but fairly well supplied, an archway, and within it this caravanserai in which the baggage must be waited for for two hours.

This first experience of a Turkish inn is striking. There is a large square yard, heaped with dirt and rubbish, round which are stables and some dark, ruinous rooms. A broken stair leads to a flat mud roof, on which are some narrow "stalls," —*rooms* they cannot be called, – with rude doors fastening only from the outside, for windows small round holes mostly stuffed with straw near the roof, for floors sodden earth, for fireplaces holes in the same, the walls slimy and unplastered, the corners full of ages of dusty cobwebs, both the walls and the rafters of the roof black with ages of smoke, and beetles and other abominations hurry into crannies, when the doors are opened, to emerge as soon as they are shut. A small hole in the wall outside each stall serves for cooking. The habits of the people are repulsive, foul odours are only hybernating, and so, mercifully, are the vermin.

While waiting for the "furniture" which is to make my "unfurnished apartment" habitable, I write sitting on my camp stool with its back against the wall, wrapped up in a horse-blanket, a heap of saddles, swords, holsters, and gear keeping the wind from my feet. The Afghan orderly smokes at the top of the stair. Plumes of palms and faintly-seen ridges of snowy

hills appear over the battlements of the roof. A snow wind blows keenly. My fingers are nearly numb, and I am generally stiff and aching, but so much better that discomforts are only an amusement. Snow is said to be impending. I have lunched frugally on sheep's milk and dates, and feel everything but my present surroundings to be very far off, and as if I had lived the desert life, and had heard the chimes of the great caravans, and had seen the wild desert riders, and the sun sinking below the level line of the desert horizon, for two months instead of two days.

Yakobiyeh is said to have 800 houses. It has some small mosques and several caravanserais, of which this is the best! It was once a flourishing place, but repeated ravages of the plague and chronic official extortions have reduced it to decay. Nevertheless, it grows grain enough for its own needs on poorly irrigated soil, and in its immense gardens apples, pears, apricots, walnuts, and mulberries flourish alongside of the orange and palm.

Kizil Robat, Jan. 14.– It was not very cold at Yakobiyeh. At home few people would be able to sit in a fireless den, with the door open, on a January night, but fireless though it was, my slender camp equipage gave it a look of comfort, and though rats or mice ate a bag of rusks during the night, and ran over my bed, there were no other annoyances. Hadji grows more dazed and possibly more unwilling every day, as he sees his vista of perquisites growing more limited, and to get off, even at nine, I

have to do the heavy as well as the light packing myself.

There was a great "row," arising out of an alleged delinquency of the *katirgis* concerning payment, when we left Yakobiyeh the following morning. The owners of the caravanserai wanted to detain us, and the archway was so packed with a shouting, gesticulating, scowling, and not kindly crowd, mostly armed, that it was not easy for me to mount. The hire of mules always includes their fodder and the keep of the men, but in the first day or two the latter usually attempt to break their bargain, and compel their employer to provide for them. So long as Arabic is spoken Hadji acts as sole interpreter, and though soldiers and *zaptiehs* were left with him he was scared at being left behind with the baggage. The people stormed and threatened at the top of their voices, but doubtless it was not so bad as it sounded, for we got through the bazars without molestation, and then into a perplexing system of ancient water-courses whose high broken banks and deep waterless beds intersect each other and the road. In contrast to this magnificent irrigation system there are modern water-channels about a foot wide, taken from the river Diyalah, which, small as they are, turn the rich deep soil into a "fruitful field."

After these glimpses of a prosperity which once was and might be again (for these vast alluvial plains, which extend from the Zagros mountains to the Euphrates and up to the Syrian desert, are capable with irrigation and cultivation of becoming the granary of Western Asia), the road emerges on a level and

somewhat gravelly waste, on which after a long ride we were overtaken by a *zaptieh* sent by the Persian agent in Yakobiyeh, to say that the baggage and servants were being forcibly detained, but shortly afterwards with a good glass the caravan was seen emerging from the town.

The country was nearly as featureless as on the preceding day, and on the whole quite barren; among the few caravans on the road there were two of immense value, the loads being the best description of Persian carpets. There were a few families on asses, migrating with all their possessions, and a few parties of Arab horsemen picturesquely and very fully armed, but no dwellings, till in the bright afternoon sunshine, on the dreariest stretch of an apparently verdureless waste, we came on the caravanserai of Wiyjahea, a gateway with a room above it, a square court with high walls and arched recesses all round for goods and travellers, and large stables. A row of reed huts, another of Arab tents, and a hovel opposite the gateway, where a man with two guns within reach sells food, tobacco, and hair ropes, make up this place of horror. For, indeed, the only water is a brackish reedy pool, with its slime well stirred by the feet of animals, and every man's hand is against his brother.

We proposed to pitch my tent in a ruined enclosure, but the headman was unwilling, and when it was suggested that it should be placed between the shop and the caravanserai, he said that before sunset all the predatory Arabs for ten miles round would hear that "rich foreigners were travelling," and would fall upon

and plunder us, so we must pitch, if at all, in the filthy and crowded court of the caravanserai. The *balakhana*, or upper room, was too insecure for me, and had no privacy, as the fodder was kept in it, and there was no method of closing the doors, which let in the bitterly cold wind.

We arrived at 3 p. m., and long before sunset a number of caravans came in, and the courtyard was full of horses, mules, and asses. When they halted the loads were taken off and stacked in the arched recesses; next, the great padded pack-saddles, which cover nearly the whole back, were removed, revealing in most cases deep sores and ulcers. Then the animals were groomed with box curry-combs, with "clatters" like the noise of a bird-scarer inside them. Fifty curry-combs going at once is like the din of the cicada. Then the beasts were driven in batches to the reedy pool, and came flying back helter-skelter through the archway, some fighting, others playing, many rolling. One of them nearly pulled my tent over by rolling among the tent ropes. It had been pitched on damp and filthy ground in a corner of the yard, among mules, horses, asses, dogs, and the roughest of rough men, but even there the damp inside looked like home.

After this brief hilarity, the pack-saddles, which serve as blankets, were put on, the camels were made to lie down in rows, most of the mules and horses were tethered in the great stable, where they neighed, stamped, and jangled their bells all night, and others were picketed in the yard among the goats and donkeys and the big dogs, which wandered about yelping. Later,

the small remaining space was filled up with sheep. It was just possible to move, but no more, and sheep and goats were even packed under the *flys* of my tent. The muleteers and travellers spread their bedding in the recesses, lighted their fires of animal fuel, and cooked their food.

At sunset the view from the roof was almost beautiful. Far away, in all directions, stretched the level desert purpling in the purple light. Very faintly, on the far horizon to the north-east, mountain ranges were painted in amethyst on an orange sky. Horsemen in companies galloped to tents which were not in sight, strings of camels cast their long shadows on the purple sand, and flocks of big brown sheep, led by armed shepherds, converged on the reedy pool in long brown lines. The evening air was keen, nearly frosty.

The prospects for the night were not encouraging, and on descending the filthy stair on which goats had taken up their quarters, I found the malodorous, crowded courtyard so blocked, that shepherds, with much pushing, shouting, and barking of big dogs, with difficulty made a way for me to pass through the packed mass of sheep and goats into the cold, damp tent, which was pitched on damp manure, two or three feet deep, into which heavy feet had trampled the carpet. The uproar of *katirgis* and travellers went on for another two hours, and was exchanged later for sounds of jangling bells, yelping and quarrelling dogs, braying asses, bleating sheep, and coarsely-snoring men.

At 9 p. m. the heavy gates, clamped with iron, were closed

and barred, and some belated travellers, eager to get in from the perils of the outside, thundered at them long and persistently, but "the door was shut," and they encountered a hoarse refusal. The *seraidar* said that 400 horses and mules, besides camels and asses, 2000 sheep, and over 70 men were lodged in the caravanserai that night.

The servants were in a recess near, and Hadji professed that he watched all night, and said that he fired at a man who tried to rob my tent after the light went out, but I slept too soundly to be disturbed, till the caravans and flocks left at daybreak, after a preliminary uproar of two hours. It was bitterly cold, and my tent and its contents were soaked with the heavy dew, nearly doubling their weight.

I started at 9 a. m., before the hoar-frost had melted, and rode with the *zaptieh* over flat, stoneless, alluvial soil, with some irrigation and the remains of some fine canals. There are villages to be seen in the distance, but though the soil is rich enough to support a very large population, there are no habitations near the road except a few temporary reed huts, beside two large caravanserais. There was little of an interesting kind except the perpetual contrast between things as they are and things as they were and might be. Some large graveyards, with brick graves, a crumbling *imamzada*, a pointed arch of brick over the Nahrud canal, a few ass caravans, with a live fowl tied by one leg on the back of each ass, and struggling painfully to keep its uneasy seat, some cultivation and much waste, and then we reached the walled

village of Sheraban, once a town, but now only possessing 300 houses.

Passing as usual among ruinous dwellings and between black walls with doors here and there, by alleys foul with heaps of refuse, and dangerous from slimy pitfalls, in the very foulest part we turned into the caravanserai, its great courtyard reeking with filth and puddles, among which are the contaminated wells from which we are supposed to drink. The experience of the night before was not repeated. There were fairly good rooms, mine looking into a palm garden, through a wooden grating, cold truly, but pleasant. I fear we may never have such "luxury" again. I remarked to my fellow-traveller that our early arrival had fortunately given us the "choice of rooms," and he replied, "choice of pig-styes, – choice of dens!" but my experience at Wiyjahea has deprived me of the last remnants of fastidiousness!

I walked through the ruinous, wretched town, and its poor bazar, where the very fine *physique* of the men was in marked contrast with their wretched surroundings, and gives one the impression that under honest officials they might be a fine people. They are not genial to strangers, however. There was some bad language used in the bazar, and on the roads they pass one in silence at the best, so unlike the Tibetans with their friendly *Tzu*. At Sheraban one of the muleteers forced his way into my room, and roughly turned over my saddle and baggage, accusing me of having taken his blanket! Hadji is useless under such circumstances. He blusters and fingers his revolver, but

carries no weight. Indeed his defects are more apparent every day. I often have to speak to him two or three times before I can rouse him from his opium dream, and there is a growing inclination to shirk his very light work when he can shift it upon somebody else. I hope that he is well-meaning, as that would cover a multitude of faults, but he is very rough and ignorant, and is either unable or unwilling to learn anything, even how to put up my trestle bed!

Open rooms have sundry disadvantages. In the night a cat fell from the roof upon my bed, and was soon joined by more, and they knocked over the lamp and milk bottle, and in the darkness had a noisy quarrel over the milk.

The march of eighteen miles here was made in six hours, at a good caravan pace. The baggage animals were sent off in advance, and the *zaptieh* led a mule loaded with chairs, blankets, and occupations. I ride with the *zaptieh* in front of me till I get near the halting-place, when M – and his orderly overtake me, as it might be disagreeable for a European woman to enter a town alone.

The route lies over treeless levels of the same brown alluvial soil, till it is lifted on a gentle gravelly slope to a series of low crumbling mounds of red and gray sandstone, mixed up with soft conglomerate rocks of jasper and porphyry pebbles. These ranges of mounds, known as the Hamrin Hills, run parallel to the great Kurdistan ranges, from a point considerably below Baghdad, nearly to Mosul and the river Zab. They mark the

termination in this direction of the vast alluvial plains of the Tigris and Euphrates, and are the first step to the uplifted Iranian plateau.

Arid and intricate ravines, dignified by the name of passes, furrow these hills, and bear an evil reputation, as Arab robbers lie in wait, "making it very unsafe for small caravans." A wild, desolate, ill-omened-looking region it is. When we were fairly within the pass, the *zaptieh* stopped, and with much gesticulation and many repetitions of the word *effendi*, made me understand that it was unsafe to proceed without a larger party. We were unmolested, but it is a discredit to the administration of the province that an organised system of pillage should be allowed to exist year after year on one of the most frequented caravan routes in Turkey. There were several companies of armed horsemen among the ranges, and some camels browsing, but we met no caravans.

From the top of the descent there was a striking view over a great brown alluvial plain, watered by the Beladruz and the Diyalah, with serrated hills of no great height, but snow-covered; on its east side a silent, strange, weird view, without interest or beauty as seen under a sullen sky. There are no villages on this march, but ancient canals run in all directions, and fragments of buildings, as well as of brick and pottery, scattered over the unploughed surface, are supposed by many to mark the situation of Dastagird, the residence of Khosroe Parviz in the seventh century. I have no books of reference with me, and can seldom

write except of such things as I see and hear.

Farther on a multitude of irrigation ditches have turned a plain of dry friable soil into a plain of mud, through which it was difficult to struggle. Then came a grove of palms, and then the town or village of Kizil Robat (Red Shrine), with its *imamzada*, whose reputation for sanctity is indicated by the immense number of graves which surround it. The walls of this decayed and wretched town are of thick layers of hardened but now crumbling earth, and on the east side there is an old gateway of burned brick. There are said to be 400 houses, which at the lowest computation would mean a population of 2000, but inhabited houses and ruins are so jumbled up together that one cannot form any estimate.

So woe-begone and miserable a place I never saw, and the dirt is appalling even in this dry weather. In spring the alleys of the town are impassable, and people whose business calls them out cross from roof to roof on boards. Pools of filthy water, loathsome ditches with broad margins of trodden slime full of abominations, ruins of houses, yards foul with refuse, half-clothed and wholly unwashed children, men of low aspect standing in melancholy groups, a well-built brick bazar, in which Manchester cottons are prominent, more mud and dirt, some ruinous caravanserais, and near the extremity of the town or village is the horrible one in which I now am, said to be the best, with a yard a foot deep in manure and slush, in the midst of which is the well, and around which are stables and recesses for

travellers.

At first it seemed likely that I should fall so low as to occupy one of these, but careful investigation revealed a ruinous stair leading to the roof, up which were two rooms, or shall I say three? – an arched recess such as coals are kept in, a small room within it, and a low wood hole. The open arch, with a *mangel* or iron pan of charcoal, serves as the "parlour" this January night, M – occupies the wood hole, and I the one room, into which Hadji, with many groans and ejaculations of "*Ya Allah!*" has brought up the essential parts of my baggage. The evening is gray and threatening, and low, snow-covered hills look grimly over the bare brown plain which lies outside this mournful place.

Khannikin, Jan. 15.– This has been a hard, rough march, but there will be many worse ahead. Rain fell heavily all night, converting the yard into a lake of trampled mud, and seemed so likely to continue that it was difficult to decide whether to march or halt. Miserable it was to see mules standing to be loaded, up to their knees in mud, bales of tents and bedding lying in the quagmire, and the shivering Indian servants up to their knees in the swamp. In rain steadily falling the twelve animals were loaded, and after the usual scrimmage at starting, in which the *bakhsheesh* is often thrown back at us, we rode out into a sea of deep mud, through which the mules, struggling and floundering, got on about a mile an hour.

After a time we came to gravel, then relapsed into deep alluvial soil, which now means deep mire, then a low range of

gravelly hills on which a few sheep and camels were browsing on artemisia and other aromatic herbs gave a temporary respite, then again we floundered through miles of mud, succeeded by miles of gravel and stones. The rain fell in torrents, and there was a cold strong wind to fight against. There was that amount of general unpropitiousness which is highly stimulating and inspiriting.

When noon came, there was not a rock or bush for shelter, and turning our backs to the storm we ate our lunch in our saddles. There was nothing to look at but brown gravel, or brown mud, brooded over by a gray mist. So we tramped on, hour after hour, in single file, the *zaptieh* leading, everything but his gun muffled in his brown *abba*, splashing through mud and water, the water pouring from my hat and cloak, the six woollen thicknesses of my mask dripping, seeing neither villages nor caravans, for caravans of goods do not travel in such rain as this. Then over a slope we went down into a lake of mud, where the *aide-de-camp* of the Governor of Khannikin, in a fez and military frock-coat and trousers, with a number of Bashi Bazouks or irregulars, met M – with courtesies and an invitation.

From the top of the next slope there was a view of Khannikin, a considerable-looking town among groves of palms and other trees. Then came a worse sea of mud, and a rudely cobbled causeway, so horrible that it diverted us back into the mud, which was so bottomless that it drove us back to the causeway, and the causeway back to the mud, the rain all the time coming down in sheets. This causeway, without improvement, is carried through

Khannikin, a town with narrow blind alleys, upon which foul courtyards open, often so foul as to render the recent ravages of cholera (if science speaks truly) a matter of necessity. The mud and water in these alleys was up to the knees of the mules. Not a creature was in the streets. No amount of curiosity, even regarding the rare sight of a Frank woman, could make people face the storm in flimsy cotton clothes.

Where the road turns to the bridge a line of irregular infantry was drawn up, poorly dressed, soaked creatures, standing in chilly mud up to their ankles, in soaked boots reaching to their knees. These joined and headed the cavalcade, and I fell humbly in the rear. Poor fellows! To keep step was impossible when it was hard work to drag their feet out of the mire, and they carried their rifles anyhow. It was a grotesque procession. A trim officer, forlorn infantry, wild-looking Bashi Bazouks, Europeans in stout mackintoshes splashed with mud from head to foot, mules rolling under their bespattered loads, and a *posse* of servants and orderlies crouching on the top of baggage, muffled up to the eyes, the asses which carry the *katirgis* and their equipments far behind, staggering and nearly done up, for the march of seventeen miles had taken eight and a half hours.

An abrupt turn in the causeway leads to the Holwan, a tributary of the Diyalah, a broad, rapid stream, over which the enterprise of a Persian has thrown a really fine brick bridge of thirteen heavily-buttressed arches, which connects the two parts of the town and gives some dignity and picturesqueness to what

would otherwise be mean. On the left bank of the Holwan are the barracks, the governor's house, some large caravanserais, the Custom-house, and a quarantine station, quarantine having just been imposed on all arrivals from Persia, giving travel and commerce a decided check.

After half a mile of slush on the river bank we entered by a handsome gateway a nearly flooded courtyard, and the Governor's house hospitably engorged the whole party.

The fully-laden mules stuck in the mud a few miles off, and did not come in for two hours, and in spite of covers everything not done up in waterproof was very wet. The servants looked most miserable, and complained of chills and rheumatism, and one of the orderlies is really ill. We cannot move till the storm is over.

The rain falls heavily still, the river is rising, the alleys are two feet deep in slush, travel is absolutely suspended, and it is not possible without necessity to go out. It was well indeed that we decided to leave the shelterless shelter of Kizil Robat. Nothing can exceed the wretchedness of Khannikin or any Turkish town in such rain as this. Would that one could think that it would be washed, but as there are no channels to carry off the water it simply lodges and stagnates in every depression, and all the accumulations of summer refuse slide into these abominable pools, and the foul dust, a foot deep, becomes mud far deeper; buried things are half uncovered; torrents, not to be avoided, pour from every roof, the courtyards are knee-deep in mud, the cows

stand disconsolately in mud; not a woman is to be seen, the few men driven forth by the merciless exigences of business show nothing but one eye, and with "loins girded" and big staffs move wearily, stumbling and plunging in the mire.

After some hours the flat mud roofs begin to leak, water finds out every weak place in the walls, the bazars, only half open for a short time in the day, are deserted by buyers, and the patient sellers crouch over *mangels*, muffled up in sheepskins, the caravanserais are crammed and quarrelsome; the price of fodder and fuel rises, and every one is drowned in rain and wretchedness. Even here, owing to the scarcity of fuel, nothing can be dried; the servants in their damp clothes come in steaming; Hadji in his misshapen "jack-boots," which he asserts he cannot take off, spreads fresh mud over the carpets whenever he enters; I shift from place to place to avoid the drip from the roof – and still the rain comes down with unabated vigour!

LETTER III (*Continued*)

The house consists of two courtyards, with buildings round them. The larger and handsomer is the *haram* or women's house, which is strictly enclosed, has no exterior windows, and its one door into the men's house is guarded by a very ancient eunuch. The courtyard of this house is surrounded partly by arched *serdabs*, with green lattice fronts, and partly by a kitchen, bakery, wood-house, *hammam* or hot bath, and the servants' quarters. The *haram* has a similar arrangement on the lower floor. A broad balcony, reached by a steep and narrow stair, runs round three sides of the upper part of this house. There are very few rooms, and some of them are used for storing fruit. The wet baggage is mostly up here, and under the deep roof the servants and orderlies camp, looking miserable. The *haram* has a balcony all round it, on which a number of reception and living rooms open, and though not grand or elaborately decorated, is convenient and comfortable.

The Turkish host evidently did not know what to do with such an embarrassing guest as a European woman, and solved the difficulty by giving me the guest-chamber in the men's house, a most fortunate decision, as I have had quiet and privacy for three days. Besides, this room has a projecting window, with panes of glass held in by nails, and there is not only a view of the alley with its slush, but into the house of some poor folk, and over that to

the Holwan, sometimes in spate, sometimes falling, and through all the hours of daylight frequented by grooms for the purpose of washing their horses. Some shingle banks, now overflowed, sustain a few scraggy willows, and on the farther side is some low-lying land. There may be much besides, but the heavy rain-clouds blot out all else.

My room is whitewashed, and is furnished with Persian rugs, Austrian bent-wood chairs, and a divan in the window, on which I sleep. Lamps, *samovars*, and glasses are kept in recesses, and a black slave is often in and out for them. Otherwise no one enters but Hadji. I get my food somewhat precariously. It is carved and sent from table at the beginning of meals, chiefly pillau, curry, *kabobs*, and roast chicken, but apparently it is not etiquette for me to get it till after the men have dined, and it is none the better for being cold.

The male part of the household consists of the Governor and his brother-in-law, a Moslem judge, and the quarantine doctor, a Cretan, takes his meals in the house. The Governor and doctor speak French. My fellow-traveller lives with them.

The night we arrived, the Governor in some agitation asked me to go and see his wife, who is very ill. The cholera has only just disappeared, and the lady had had a baby, which died of it in three days, and "being a boy her heart was broken," and "something had come under her arm." So I went with him into the *haram*, which seemed crowded with women of various races and colours, peeping from behind curtains and through

chinks of doors, tittering and whispering. The wife's room is richly carpeted and thoroughly comfortable, with a huge charcoal brazier in the centre, and cushions all over the floor, except at one end, where there is a raised alcove with a bed in it.

On this the lady sat – a rather handsome Kurdish woman, about thirty-five, dressed in a silk quilted jacket, and with a black gauze handkerchief round her head, and a wadded quilt over her crossed legs. She was supported by a pile of pillows. Since then I have been sent for to see her several times every day, and found her always in the same position. There is surely something weird about it. She says she sits there all night, and has not lain down for two months. A black slave was fanning her, and two women, shrouded in veils of tinselled gauze, sat on the bed combing her luxuriant hair. She is not really beautiful at all, but her husband assures me constantly that she is "*une femme savante*." She has property and the consideration which attaches to it. She was burning with fever and very weak.

I had scarcely returned to my room when my host sent again, begging that I would go back and see the doctor. I found that it was expected that I should persuade the lady to consent to have the abscess, or whatever it is, reopened. The room was full of women and eunuchs, and the chief eunuch, an elderly Arab, sat on the bed and supported her while the doctor dressed the wound, and even helped him with it. Her screams were fearful, and five people held her with difficulty. Her husband left the room, unable to bear her cries.

Quite late I was sent for again, and that time by the lady, to know if I thought she would die. It appears that her brother, the judge, remains here to see that she is not the victim of foul play, but I don't like to ask to whom the suspicion points, or whether our host, although the civil governor, keeps him here that he may not be suspected in case his rich wife dies.

Except for the repeated summonses to the sick-room, a walk on the slime of the roof when the rain ceases for a time, and on the balcony of the *haram* when it does not, and a study of the habits of my neighbours over the way, it is very dull. I have patched and mended everything that gave any excuse for either operation, have written letters which it is not safe to post, and have studied my one book on Persia till I know it throughout, and still the rain falls nearly without cessation and the quagmires outside deepen.

So bad is it that, dearly as Orientals love bazars and *hammams*, Hadji refuses leave to go to either. I remarked to him that he must be glad of such a rest, and he replied in his usual sententious fashion: "They who have to work must work. God knows all." I fear he is very lazy, and he has no idea of making one comfortable or of keeping anything clean. He stamps the mud of the courtyard into the carpets, and wipes my plates without washing them, with his shirt. He considers that our host has attained the height of human felicity. "What is there left to wish for?" he says. "He has numbers of slaves, and he's always buying more, and he's got numbers of women and eunuchs, and

everything, and when he wants money he just sends round the villages. God is great! *Ya Allah!*"

Khannikin, being the nearest town to the Persian frontier, should be a place of some importance. It is well situated at an altitude of 1700 feet among groves of palms, on both banks of the Holwan, and having plenty of water, the rich alluvium between it and Yakobiyeh is able to support its own population, though it has to import for caravans. Most of the Persian trade with Baghdad and thousands of Shiah pilgrims annually pass through it. It is a customs station, and has a regiment of soldiers. Nevertheless, it is very ruinous, and its population has diminished of late years from 5000 to about 1800 (exclusive of the troops), and of this number a fifth have been carried off by cholera within the last few weeks. It has no schools, and no special industries. The stamp of decay rests upon it. Exactions, crushing hope out of the people, the general insecurity of property, and the misrule which has blighted these fine Asiatic provinces everywhere, sufficiently explain its decadence.

The imposition of quarantine on arrivals from Persia has all but stopped the supply of charcoal, and knowing the scarcity in the house, I am going without a fire, as most of the inhabitants are doing. A large caravanserai outside the walls is used as a quarantine station, and three others are taken as lazarettos. Out of these arrangements the officials make a great deal of money in fees, but anything more horrible than the sanitary state of these places cannot be conceived. The water appears to be

the essence of typhoid fever and cholera, and the unfortunate *détenus* are crowded into holes unfit for beasts, breathing pestiferous exhalations, and surrounded by such ancient and modern accumulations of horrors that typhus fever, cholera, and even the plague might well be expected to break out.

Yesterday, for a brief interval, hills covered with snow appeared through rolling black clouds, and a change seemed probable, but rain fell in torrents all night; there is a spate in the river, and though we were ready to start at eight this morning, the *katirgis* declined to move, saying that the road could not be travelled because of the depth of the fords and the mud.

The roof, though a good one, is now so leaky that I am obliged to sleep under my waterproof cloak, and the un-puttied window-frames let in the rain. Early this morning a gale from the south-west came on, and the howling and roaring have been frightful, the rain falling in sheets most of the time. Sensations are not wanting. One of the orderlies is seriously ill, and has to be left behind under medical care till he can be sent to India, – the second man who has broken down. A runner came in with the news that all caravans are stopped in the Zagros mountains by snow, which has been falling for five days, and that the road is not expected to be open for a fortnight. Later, the Persian agent called to say that on the next march the road, which is carried on a precipice above the river, has slid down bodily, and that there are fifteen feet of water where there should be only two. Of course this prolonged storm is "exceptional." The temperature

is falling, and it is so cold without a fire that though my bed is only a blanket-covered dais of brick and lime, dripped upon continually, in a window with forty draughts, I am glad to muffle myself up in its blankets and write among wraps.

The Governor, recognising the craze of Europeans for exercise, sent word that M – might walk in the balcony of the *haram* if I went to chaperon him, and this great concession was gladly accepted, for it was the only possible way of getting warm. The apparition of a strange man, and a European, within the precincts of the *haram* was a great event, and every window, curtain, and doorway was taken advantage of by bright dark eyes sparkling among folds of cotton and gauze. The enjoyment was surreptitious, but possibly all the more keen, and sounds of whispering and giggling surged out of every crevice. There are over thirty women, some of them negresses. Some are Kurds and very handsome, but the faces of the two handsomest, though quite young, have something fiendish in their expression. I have seldom seen a *haram* without its tragedies of jealousy and hate, and every fresh experience makes me believe that the system is as humiliating to men as it is to women.

The *haram* reception-rooms here are large and bright, with roofs and cornices worked daintily in very white plaster, and there are superb carpets on the floors, and divans covered with Damascus embroidery in gold silk on cream muslin.

Each day the demands for my presence in the sick-room are more frequent, and though I say that I can scarcely aspire to

be a nurse, they persist in thinking that I am a *Hakīm*, and possibly a useful spy on the doctor. I have become aware that unscrupulous jealousy of the principal wife exists, and, as is usual in the East, everybody distrusts everybody else, and prefers to trust strangers. The husband frequently asks me to remove what seems a cancerous tumour, and the doctor says that an operation is necessary to save the lady's life, but when I urge him to perform it, and offer a nurse's help, he replies that if she were to die he would be at once accused of murder, and would run a serious risk.

The Governor to-day was so anxious that I should persuade the lady to undergo an operation that he even brought Hadji into the room to interpret what I said in Arabic. His ceaseless question is, "Will she die?" and she asks me the same many times every day. She insists that I shall be present each day when the wound is dressed, and give help, lest the doctor without her leave should plunge a knife into the swelling. These are most distressing occasions, for an hour of struggle and suffering usually ends in delirium.

This afternoon, however, she was much freer from pain, and sent for me to amuse her. She wore some fine jewels, and some folds of tinselled gauze round her head, and looked really handsome and intelligent. Her husband wished that we could converse without his imperfect interpreting, and repeated many times, "She is a learned woman, and can write and read several languages." The room was as usual full of women, who had

removed their veils at their lord's command. I showed the lady some Tibetan sketches, but when I came to one of a man the women replaced their veils!

When I showed some embroidery, the Governor said he had heard that the Queen of England employed herself with her needle in leisure hours, but that it is not *comme il faut* here for ladies to work. It seems that the making of sweetmeats is the only occupation which can be pursued without loss of dignity. Is it wonderful that intolerable *ennui* should be productive of the miserable jealousies, rivalries, intrigues, and hatreds which accompany the system of polygamy?

The host, although civil governor of a large district, also suffers from *ennui*. The necessary official duties are very light, and the accounts and reports are prepared by others. If money is wanted he makes "an exaction" on a village, and subordinates screw it out of the people. Justice, or the marketable commodity which passes for such, is administered by a *kadi*. He clatters about the balconies with slippered feet, is domestic, that is, he spends most of the day in the *haram*, smokes, eats two meals of six or seven courses each, and towards evening takes a good deal of wine, according to a habit which is becoming increasingly common among the higher classes of Moslems. He is hospitable, and is certainly anything but tyrannical in his household.

The customs and ways of the first Turkish house I have visited in would be as interesting to you as they were to myself, but it would be a poor return for hospitality to dwell upon anything,

unless, like the difficulties regarding the illness of the principal wife, it were a matter of common notoriety.

It is a punishable act in Persia, and possibly here also, to look into a neighbour's house, but I cannot help it unless I were to avoid the window altogether. Wealth and poverty are within a few feet of each other, and as Moslems are charitable to a degree and in a manner which puts us to shame, the juxtaposition is advantageous.

My neighbour's premises consist of a very small and mean yard, now a foot deep in black mire, a cow-shed, and a room without door or windows, with a black uneven floor, and black slimy rafters – neither worse nor better than many hovels in the Western Isles of Scotland. A man in middle life, a woman of dubious age, two girls from eight to ten years old, and a boy a little older are the occupants. The furniture consists of some wadded quilts, a copper pot, an iron girdle, a clay ewer or two, a long knife, a wooden spoon, a clay receptacle for grain, two or three earthenware basins, glazed green, and a wicker tray. The cow-shed contains – besides the cow, which is fed on dried thistles – a spade, an open basket, and a baggage pad. A few fowls live in the house, and are disconcerted to find that they cannot get out of it without swimming.

The weather is cold and raw, fuel is enormously dear, work is at a standstill, and cold and *ennui* keep my neighbours in bed till the day is well advanced. "Bed" consists of a wadded quilt laid on the floor, with another for a covering. The man and boy sleep

at one end of the room, the woman and girls at the other, with covered heads. None make any change in their dress at night, except that the man takes off the *pagri* of his turban, retaining only a skull cap.

The woman gets up first, lights a fire of tamarisk twigs and thistles in a hole in the middle of the floor, makes porridge of some coarse brownish flour and water, and sets it on to warm – to *boil* it, with the means at her disposal, is impossible. She wades across the yard, gives the cow a bunch of thistles, milks it into a basin, adds a little leaven to the milk, which she shakes in a goat skin till it is thick, carries the skin and basket to the house, feeds the fowls from the basket, and then rouses her lord. He rises, stretches himself, yawns, and places himself cross-legged by the fire, after putting on his *pagri*. The room is dense with pungent wood smoke, which escapes through the doorway, and only a few embers remain. The wife hands him an earthen bowl, pours some porridge into it, adds some "thick milk" from the goat skin, and stands before him with her arms crossed while he eats, then receives the bowl from his hands and kisses it, as is usual with the slaves in a household.

Then she lights his pipe, and while he enjoys it she serves her boy with breakfast in the same fashion, omitting the concluding ceremony, after which she and the girls retire to a respectful distance with the big pot, and finish its contents simultaneously. The pipe over, she pours water on her lord's hands, letting it run on the already damp floor, and wipes them with her *chadar*. No

other ablution is customary in the house.

Poor as this man is, he is a Hadji, and having brought from Mecca a "prayer stone," with the Prophet's hand upon it, he takes it from his girdle, puts it on the floor, bows his forehead on it, turning Mecca-ward, and says his prayers, repeating his devotions towards evening. The first day or two he went out, but the roads now being almost impassable, he confines himself to the repairing of a small dyke, which keeps the water from running into the room, which is lower than the yard, and performs its duty very imperfectly, the soak from the yard and the drip from the roof increasing the sliminess hourly. These repairs, an occasional pipe, and much sleep are the record of this man's day till an hour before sunset, when the meal of the morning is repeated with the addition of some cheese.

The children keep chiefly in bed. Meanwhile the woman, the busy bee of the family, contrives to patter about nearly all day in wet clothing, carrying out rubbish in single handfuls, breaking twigs, cleaning the pot, and feeding the cow. The roof, which in fine weather is the scene of most domestic occupations, is reached by a steep ladder, and she climbs this seven times in succession, each time carrying up a fowl, to pick for imaginary worms in the slimy mud. Dyed yarn is also carried up to steep in the rain, and in an interval of dryness some wool was taken up and carded. An hour before sunset she lights the fire, puts on the porridge, and again performs seven journeys with seven fowls, feeds them in the house, attends respectfully to her lord, feeds her

family, including the cow, paddles through mire to draw water from the river, and unrolls and spreads the wadded quilts. By the time it is dark they are once more in bed, where I trust this harmless, industrious woman enjoys a well-earned sleep.

The clouds are breaking, and in spite of adverse rumours it is decided *coûte que coûte* to start to-morrow. For my own part I prefer the freedom even with the "swinishness" of a caravanserai to receiving hospitality for which no fitting return can be made.

I. L. B.

LETTER IV

Saripul-i-Zohab, Jan. 21.

The rain at last ceased, and after the *katirgis* had squabbled for an hour over the baggage, we got off at ten, two days ago, very grateful for shelter and hospitality under such untoward circumstances. Six Bashi Bazouks and two *zaptiehs* on foot in ragged and incongruous uniforms escorted us to the Turkish frontier.

The streets were in a terrible condition, and horse and footmen, after an attempt to march in pairs, fell perforce into a floundering and disorderly single file, the footmen occasionally pulling themselves out of mud holes by the tails of the horses. Outside the town there was an expanse of mud and flooded water-channels which broke up the last attempt at a procession, and led to a general *sauve qui peut*. The mire was tenacious and up to the horses' knees, half the mules were down with their loads, Hadji rolled into the mud, my capable animal snorted and struggled, some went on banks and some took to streams, the asses had to be relieved of their loads, and the air was full of shouts and objurgations, till after much delay the forlorn rabble all struggled to the *terra firma* of a gravelly slope, splashed from head to foot.

The road crosses low, rolling, gravelly hills, with an occasional

outcrop of red sandstone, and ascends on the whole. The sun was bright, but the wind was strong and very cold. The Bashi Bazouk escort was altogether harum-scarum and inconsequent, careering in circles, and firing at birds (which they never hit) from the saddle, and when we reached some low hills bearing a bad reputation, the officer, in order to represent danger and his vigilant care, threw them out in all directions scouting for robbers, till we came to a steepish hill crowned by a round tower with a mushroom top, a few ruinous mud buildings, and a tattered tent. Here the escort formed into one line, and the ragged garrison into another, with an officer facing them, and were photographed as they shivered in the biting wind. This tower is a Turkish frontier fort.

Soon afterwards the Persian frontier is crossed, the hills increase considerably in size, and mud was exchanged for firm, rough gravel. A feature of the otherwise featureless landscape is the frequent occurrence of towers like martello towers, on hill-tops, placed there for the shelter of the guards who formerly kept a look-out for robbers. In the uninteresting gravel lie pebbles of jasper and agate, emerald green, red, yellow, and purple. The first object of the slightest interest in this new country was a village of Ilyats, built of reed screens, with roofs of goat's-hair cloth, and with small yards with reed walls in front. The women, who wore full trousers and short jackets, were tall, somewhat striking-looking, and unveiled. Their hair hung down in long plaits, and they wore red handkerchiefs knotted at the back of

the head.

There an escort of four Persian *sowars* joined us. The type of face was that with which we are familiar on Sasanian coins and sculptured stones, the brow and chin receding considerably, and the nose thin and projecting, the profile suggesting a beak rather than a human face, and the skin having the appearance of being drawn so tightly over the bones as to force the eyes into singular prominence.

A six hours' march ended at the wildly-situated village of Kasr-i-Shirin, high on the right bank of the Holwan, with a plantation of dates on the left bank and considerable cultivation in the valley. It has only eighty houses of the most wretched construction, rivalled in height and size by middens, the drainage of which wastes itself on the wretched roadway. A caravanserai of the most miserable description, a square fort with a small garrison, and some large graveyards with domed tombs and curious obelisks, are the salient features of this village. Its wretched aspect is accounted for by its insecurity. It has been destroyed by robber tribes as often as there was anything worth destroying, and it has been so tossed to and fro between Turkey and Persia as not to have any of the special characteristics of either empire.

We stopped short of the village, at a great pile of building on a height, in massiveness and irregularity resembling a German medieval castle, in which a letter had secured accommodation. It has been unoccupied since its owner, Jan Mir, a sheikh of a

robber tribe, and the terror of the surrounding neighbourhood, was made away with by the Persian Government.

The accommodation consisted of great, dark, arched, vaulted rooms, with stone-flagged floors, noble in size, but needing fifty candles and huge log fires to light up and warm their dark recesses, and gruesome and damp with one candle and a crackle of twigs. They were clean, however, and their massive walls kept out the cold. The village is at an elevation of 2300 feet, and the temperature has greatly changed.

The interest of Kasr-i-Shirin is that it lies among masses of ancient rubble, and that the slopes which surround it are completely covered with hewn and unhewn stones of all sizes, the relics of a great city, at the western extremity of which the present wretched hamlet stands.[11] The walls, which are easily traced, enclose an irregular square, the shortest front of which is said to be three miles long. They are built of roughly-hewn blocks of gray and red sandstone, and very hard mortar or concrete. The

[11] Another interest, however, is its connection with many of the romantic legends still told of Khosroe Parviz and his beautiful queen, complicated with love stories concerning the sculptor Farhad, to whom the Persians attribute some of their most famous rock sculptures. One of the most romantic of these legends is that Farhad loved Shirin, and that Khosroe was aware of it, and promised to give her to him if he could execute the impossible task of bringing to the city the abundant waters of the mountains. Farhad set himself to the Herculean labour, and to the horror of the king nearly accomplished it, when Khosroe, dreading the advancing necessity of losing Shirin or being dishonoured, sent to inform him of her death. Being at the time on the top of a precipice, urging on the work of the aqueduct, the news filled him with such ungovernable despair that he threw himself down and was killed.

blocks are so huge in many places as to deserve the often misused epithet Cyclopean.

Within this enclosure are remains of houses built of water-worn round stones, which lie in monstrous heaps, and of a large fort on an eminence. In another direction are the ruins of an immense palace of quadrangular form, with only one entrance, and large underground rooms now nearly choked up. There are remains of what must have been very fine archways, but as the outer coating of hewn stone and all the decorations have fallen off, leaving only the inner case of rough rubble and concrete, the architectural forms are very badly defined, and the aspect of what must once have been magnificent is now forbidding and desolate. The remains of an aqueduct cut in the rock, and of troughs and stone pipes by which water was brought into the palace and city, from a distance of fifteen miles, are still traceable among the desolations, but of the beautiful gardens which they watered, and with which Khosroe surrounded the beautiful Shirin, not a trace remains. There was a pale sunset, flushing with pale pink distant leagues of sodden snow, and right across a lurid opening in a heavy mass of black clouds the great ruined pile of the palace of Khosroe the Magnificent stood out, a dismal commentary on splendour and fame.

The promise of the evening was fulfilled the next day in windy rain, which began gently, but afterwards fell in persistent torrents, varied by pungent swirls of sleet and snow. Leaving the gash through cliffs with curious stratification in white and red,

formed by the Holwan, the day was spent in skirting or crossing low hills. The mud was very deep and tenacious, and the rate of progress barely two miles an hour. There were no caravans, travellers, or population, and no birds or beasts. The rain clouds hung low and heavy, mists boiled up from among the folds of the hills, the temperature fell perceptibly. It was really inspiriting for people protected by good mackintoshes.

After riding for six hours the rain changed into sleet and wet snow, blotting out the hills and creating an unnatural twilight, in which we floundered in mud up to the mules' knees into the filthiest village I have ever seen, a compound of foul, green ditches, piles of dissolving manure, mud hovels looking as if they were dissolving too, reed huts, and an Ilyat village, grouped round the vilest of caravanserais, the entrance to which was knee-deep in mire. To lodge in it was voted impossible, and the escort led us in the darkening mist and pelting sleet to an adjacent mud hamlet as hopeless-looking on the other side of the bridge, where, standing up to the knees of the mules in liquid manure, we sought but vainly for shelter, forded the Holwan, and returned to the caravanserai through almost impassable slush.

It was simply loathsome, with its stench, its foulness, and its mire, and was already crowded and noisy with men and beasts. There was a great courtyard with arched recesses all round, too abominable to be occupied, too exposed and ruinous, even had they been cleaned, to give shelter from the driving sleet. The last resource was to pass through an archway into the great,

lofty mule stable, on both sides of which are similar recesses or mangers, about ten feet by seven and about eight feet high. The stable was of great size and height with a domed roof. Probably it runs half-way round the quadrangle at the back of the uninhabitable recesses. There were at least four hundred mules in this place, jangling their great bells, and crowds of *katirgis*, travellers, and *zaptiehs*, all wet and splashed over their heads with mud, some unloading, others making fires and feeding their mules, all shouting when they had anything to say, the Babel aggravated by the clatter of the rattles of a hundred curry-combs and the squeals of fighting horses.

The floor was deep with the manure of ages and piled with bales and boxes. In the side recesses, which are about the height of a mule's back, the muleteers camped with their fires and their goods, and laid the provender for their beasts in the front. These places are the mangers of the eastern caravanserai, or *khan*, or inn. Such must have been the inn at Bethlehem, and surely the first step to the humiliation of "the death of the cross" must have been the birth in the manger, amidst the crowd and horrors of such a stable.

The odour was overpowering and the noise stunning, and when our wet, mud-covered baggage animals came in, adding to the din, there was hardly room to move, far less for the roll in which all mules indulge when the loads are taken off; and the crush resulted in a fight, and one mule got his fore-feet upon my "manger," and threatened to share it with me. It was an awful

place to come to after a six hours' march in rain and snow, but I slid off my mule into the recess, had it carpeted, put down my chair, hung a blanket up in front, and prepared to brave it, when the inhabitants of this room, the one place which has any pretensions to being a room in the village, were bribed by an offer of six *krans* (about four shillings) to vacate it for me. Its "pretensions" consist in being over a gateway, and in having a door, and a square hole looking on the street; a crumbling stair slippery with mud leads up to it. The roof leaks in every direction, and the slimy floor is full of pools, but it is luxury after the caravanserai stable, and with one waterproof sheet over my bed and another over myself I have fared well, though the door cannot be shut, and the rest of the party are in the stable at an impassable distance.

Our language happily has no words in which the state of this village can be described. In front of this room is a broken ditch full of slimy greenish water, which Hadji took for my tea! There has been a slight snowfall during the night, and snow is impending. We have now reached a considerable altitude, and may expect anything. Hadji has just climbed the stair with groans of "*Ya Allah*," and has almost wailed out, "Colonel says we go – God help us."

Kirrind, Jan. 23.– From Saripul-i-Zohab we are taking the most southerly of the three routes to Kirmanshah traversed by Sir H. Rawlinson in 1836.[12] A sea of mud varied by patches

[12] The Pashalik of Zohab, now Persian territory, is fully described by Major

of sodden snow, walls of rock with narrow passes, great snow-covered mountains, seen spectrally for a minute at a time through swirling snow-clouds, black tents of nomads, half-drowned villages, and a long, cold, steep ascent, among scrub oaks and dwarf ash, to snow which was not melting, and the hospitalities of a Kurdish village, comprise the interests of the march from Saripul to Myan Tak, so far as they lie on the surface, but in various ways this part of Kurdistan has many interests, not to be absolutely ignored even in a familiar letter.

Here the Ilyats, who are supposed to constitute a fifth of the rural population of Persia, are met with in large numbers, and their brown flocks and herds are still picking up a scanty subsistence. The great chief of this, the Gurān tribe, holds the region on an annual payment to the Persian Government, gives grain to his tribesmen, and receives from them, of corn one-half, and of rice two-thirds of the crop. These people sow their grain in early spring, and then move up with their flocks to the mountain pastures, leaving behind only a few men to harvest the crops. They use no manure, this being required for fuel, and in the case of rice they allow a fallow of at least seven years. There are very few cultivators resident upon these lands, but Ilyat camps occur frequently.

The region is steeped in history. The wretched village of Saripul is the Calah of Asshur and the Halah of the Israelitish

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Rawlinson in a most interesting paper in *The Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, vol. ix. part 1, p. 26.

captivity,[13] and gave to the surrounding country the name of Chalonitis, which we have on our old maps. A metropolitan See in the fifth century a. d., soon after the institution of the Nestorian hierarchy, it was called Calah, Halah, and Holwan. If the Diyalah be the ancient Gyndes, noteworthy for the singular delay of Cyrus on his march to Babylon, and Saripul the ancient Holwan, and if in addition to the numerous Chaldæan and Sasanian remains there are relics of Semiramis and of the fire-temples of the Magi, the crowd of historic associations is almost too much for one day, and I will return to the insignificant details of the journey.

We left at nine, crossed the Holwan by a four-arched brick bridge, and in falling snow and deep mud rode over fairly level ground till we came to an abrupt range of limestone rock, with a natural rift, across which the foundations of a wall still remain. The clouds were rolling low, and the snow was driving wildly, so as to make it impossible to see the sculptured tablet described by Rawlinson and Layard, on which a high-priest of the Magi is represented, with one hand raised in benediction, and the other grasping a scroll, the dress being the pontifical robe worn by the Zoroastrian priests, with a square cap, pointed in front, and lappets covering the mouth. Above this is a tomb with an ornamented entrance.

We were now among a very strange and mysterious people, of whose ancestry and actual beliefs very little is known. They

[13] Gen. x. 11; 2 Kings xviii. 11; 1 Chron. v. 26.

are Ali-Ilahis, but Europeans often speak of them as "Davidites," from their special veneration for King David. This tomb in the rift is called Dukkani-Daoud, or David's shop, and the people believe that he still dwells there, and come on pilgrimages and to offer animals in sacrifice from all parts of Kurdistan. He is believed to work as a smith, and the *katirgis* say that he makes suits of fine armour. A part of the tomb which is divided from the rest by a low partition is believed to be a reservoir containing the water which he uses to temper his metal. A great mound with some building in the centre, on the right of the road near this gorge, though properly it bears another name, is called by the people "David's Fort." Jewish traditions abound, specially concerning David, who is regarded by the tribes as their great tutelar prophet.

The Gurāns and Kalhurs, who are the nomadic inhabitants of this district, are of a very marked type of physiognomy, so Israelitish indeed that, taken along with certain traditions of their origin, their Jewish names, and their veneration for David, they have been put forward as claimants to the dignity of being the "lost tribes." The great Hebrew traveller of the twelfth century, to whom I have referred before, believed that the whole of the Ali-Ilahis were Jews, and writes of 100 synagogues in the Zagros mountains, and of 50,000 Jewish families in the neighbourhood.

As we shall be for some days among these people, I will abbreviate Sir H. Rawlinson's sketch of their tenets. He considers that Ali-Ilahism bears evident marks of Judaism, mixed up with

Moslem, Christian, and Sabæan legends. The Ali-Ilahis believe in 1001 incarnations of the Godhead in a series; among them Benjamin, Moses, Elias, David, Jesus Christ, Ali and Salman his tutor, the Imam Houssein and the Haftān (or seven bodies), the chief spiritual guides in the early ages of Islam, "and each, worshipped as a Deity, is an object of adoration in some locality of Kurdistan." The tomb of one of these, Bābā Yadgār, is their holy place, and this was regarded as the dwelling of Elijah at the time when the Arabs invaded Persia. All these incarnations are regarded as of one and the same person. All that changes is the bodily form of the Divine manifestation. There are degrees in the perfection of the development, and the most perfect forms are Benjamin, David, and Ali.

Practically, however, the metaphysical speculations involved in this creed of successive incarnations are unknown, and the Imam Ali, the cousin of Mohammed, is the great object of worship. Though professing Mohammedanism the Ali-Ilahis are held in great horror by "believers," and those of this region lie under the stigma of practising unholy rites as a part of their religion, and have received the name of "Chiragh Sonderan," the putters-out of lights.[14] This accusation, Sir A. H. Layard observes, may be only a calumny invented, like many another, to justify persecution.

Passing through the rift in the Dukkani-Daoud range which has led to this digression, we entered an ascending valley between

[14] See Sir A. H. Layard's *Early Adventures*, vol. i. p. 217.

the range through which we had passed and some wild mountains covered with snow, which were then actively engaged in brewing a storm. Farther on there was irrigation and cultivation, and then the wretched village of Pai Tak, and the ruins of a bridge. There, the people told us, we must halt, as the caravanserai at the next place was already full, and we plunged about in the snow and mud looking for a hovel in which to take shelter, but decided to risk going on, and shortly began the ascent of the remarkable pass known as "The Gates of Zagros," on the ancient highway between Babylonia and Media, by which, in a few hours, the mountain barrier of Zagros is crossed, and the plain of Kirrind, a part of the great Iranian plateau, is reached.

This great road, which zigzags steeply up the pass, is partly composed of smoothed boulders and partly of natural rock, somewhat dressed, and much worn by the continual passage of shod animals. It is said to be much like a torrent bed, but the snow was lying heavily upon it, filling up its inequalities. Dwarf oaks, hawthorn, ash, and other scrub find root-hold in every crevice. All that may be ugly was draped in pure white, and looking back from the surrounding glitter, the view of low ranges lying in indigo gloom was very striking. On the ascent there is a remarkable arch of great blocks of white marble, with a vaulted recess, called the "Tak-i-Girreh," "the arch holding the road," which gives the popular name of Gardan-i-Tak-i-Girreh (the pass of Tak-i-Girreh) to the ascent, though the geographers call it Akabah-i-Holwan (the defile of Holwan).

After the deep mud of the earlier part of the march it was a pleasure to ride through pure, deep, powdery snow, and to find the dirt of the village of Myan Tak, a Kurdish hamlet situated on a mountain torrent among steep hills and small trees, covered with this radiant mantle. The elevation of the pass is 4630 feet, but Myan Tak is at a lower altitude an hour farther on.

The small and ruinous caravanserai was really full of caravans detained by the snowstorm, and we lodged in a Kurdish house, typical of the style of architecture common among the settled tribes. Within a wide doorway without a door, high enough for a loaded mule to enter, is a very large room, with a low, flat mud roof, supported on three rows of misshapen trunks of trees, with their branches cut off about a foot from the stem, all black and shiny with smoke. Mud and rubble platforms, two feet high, run along one side and one end, and on the end one there is a clay, beehive-shaped fireplace, but no chimney. Under this platform the many fowls are shut in at night by a stone at the hole by which they enter. Within this room is a perfectly dark stable of great size. Certainly forty mules, besides asses and oxen, were lodged in it, and the overflow shared the living-room with a number of Kurds, *katirgis*, servants, dogs, soldiers, and Europeans. The furniture consisted of guns and swords hanging on the walls.

The owner is an old Kurd with some handsome sons with ruddy complexions and auburn hair. The big house is the patriarchal roof, where the patriarch, his sons, their wives and children, and their animals, dwell together. The women, however,

had all been got rid of somehow. The old Kurd made a great fire on the dais, wood being plentiful, and crouched over it. My bed was pitched near it, and enclosed by some reed screens. With chairs and a table, with routes, maps, writing materials, and a good lantern upon it, an excellent dinner of soup and a leg of mutton, cooked at a bonfire in the middle of the floor, and the sight of all the servants and *katirgis* lying round it, warm and comfortable, and the knowledge that we were above the mud, the clouds of blinding smoke which were the only drawback scarcely affected the cheerfulness and comfort of the blazing, unstinted fire. The doorway gave not only ample ventilation but a brilliant view of snow, and of myriads of frosty stars.

It was infinitely picturesque, with the fitful firelight falling on the uncouth avenues of blackened tree-stumps, on big dogs, on mild-eyed ox faces and long ass ears, on turbaned Indian heads, and on a confused crowd of Turks, Kurds, and Persians, some cooking, some sleeping, some smoking, while from the black depth beyond a startling bray of an ass or the abortive shriek of a mule occasionally proceeded, or a stray mule created a commotion by rushing in from the snow outside.

I slept comfortably, till I was awakened early by various country sounds – the braying of an ass into my ear (for I was within a few inches of the stable), the crowing of cocks, and some hens picking up crumbs upon my bed. The mules were loaded in the living-room. The mercury was only 26° at 9 a. m., and under cloudless sunshine the powdery snow glittered

and crackled. There were difficulties ahead, we heard. The road heavily blocked with snow was only just open, and the Persian post, which should have passed forty-eight hours before, had not been heard of, showing that the snow is very deep farther on.

It was beautiful, that uplifted, silent world of snow and mountains, on whose skirts for some miles grew small apple and pear trees, oak, ash, and hawthorn, each twig a coral spray. In the deepest depression, among great rocks, now masses of snow, tumbles a now partially arrested stream, gleaming with icicles, one of the head-waters of the Holwan. After getting through this picturesque forest of scrub, the road emerges on the plateau of the Kirrind valley, the greatest altitude of which is about 5800 feet. It is said to be irrigated and fertile. It is now, as I describe it, a wide valley, without a tree or bush, a rolling plain of snow from two to three feet deep, marked only by lines made by birds' feet and the beating of the tips of birds' wings, the track across it a corrugated trench, wide enough for one mule, the sun brilliant, the sky blue, the surface of the snow flashing light from millions of crystals with a glitter not to be borne, all dazzling, "glistering," silent, – a white world and a blue heaven, with a sun "shining in his strength," – light without heat.

It has been a tremendous day's march, only fourteen miles in seven and a half hours of severe toil! The *katirgis* asked us to keep together in case of difficulties with caravans. Difficulties indeed! A mild term! I was nearly smashed. I little knew what meeting a caravan in these circumstances meant till we met the first sixty

animals, each laden with two heavy packing-cases. The question arises who is to give way, and who is to drive his heavily-laden beasts off the track, to struggle, flounder, and fall in three feet of snow, not to get up again without being unloaded, and even then with difficulty.

The rub came on a bank near a stream where there was a deep drift. I decided to give way, but nothing would induce my mule to face the snow. An orderly was in front and Hadji behind. Down the track came sixty animals, loaded with their great packing-cases. They could not and would not give way, and the two caravans came into collision. There were mules struggling and falling, loads overturned, muleteers yelling and roaring, Hadji groaning "God help us!" my mule, a new one, a big strong animal, unused to a bit, plunging and kicking, in the middle of a "free fight." I was struck hard on my ankle by a packing-case and nearly knocked off. Still, down they came, in apparently endless hordes; my mule plunged her bridle off, and kicked most violently; there were yells all round. My snow spectacles were knocked off and lost, then came another smash, in which I thought a bone was broken. Fearing that I should be laid up with a broken limb for weeks in some horrible caravanserai, and really desperate with the danger and confusion, I called over and over again to Hadji to get off and pull my mule into the snow or I should be killed! He did not stir, but sat dazed on his pack moaning "God help us!" till he, the mule, and the load were rolled over in the drift. The orderly contrived to get the bridle

on my mule, and to back his own in front of me, and as each irrepressible animal rolled down the bank he gave its load a push, which, nicely balanced as these loads are, made it swerve, and saved me from further damage. Hadji had rolled off four times previously, and the last I saw of him at that time and of the caravan was a man, five mules, and their loads buried in the snow. The personal results to me of what is euphemistically called a "difficulty," are my blue glasses gone, a number of bruises, a badly-torn riding-skirt, and a bad cut, which bled profusely, and then the blood froze.

A number of caravans snowed up for several days were *en route*, and there were many similar encounters, and donkeys and mules falling with their loads and rolling into the deep snow, and *katirgis* coming to blows over the right-of-way. If a donkey is forced off the track it goes down at once. I unfortunately caught my foot in the pack of one and rolled it over, and as it disappeared in the snow its pack and saddle fell over its head and displayed the naked vertebræ of its poor back.

This Kirrind valley must be fully twenty miles long by from two to five broad, but there was only one village inhabited and two in ruins. As we floundered along in the snow with our jaded animals, two well-armed men on fine horses met and joined us, sent by the *Agha* Abdul Rahim, son of the British agent at Kirmanshah, whose guests we are to be. Following them was a *taktrawan* or litter for me, a wooden box with two side doors, four feet high, six feet long, and three feet wide. At each end are

long shafts, and between each pair of shafts a superb mule, and each mule has a man to lead him. I could never use such a thing except in case of a broken limb, but I am very grateful to Abdul Rahim for sending it fifty-six miles.

The temperature fell with the sun; the snowy hills took on every shade of rose and pink, and in a universal blush of tender colouring we reached Kirrind. All of a sudden the colour died out, the rose-flushed sky changed to blue-gray, and pallid wastes of unbroken snow stretching into the gray distance made a glorious winter landscape. We are now fairly in for the rigours of a Persian winter.

Kirrind, the capital of the Kirrind Kurds, is either grotesquely or picturesquely situated in and around a narrow gap in a range of lofty hills, through which the Ab-i-Kirrind rushes, after rising in a spring immediately behind. The gap suggests the word jaws, and in these open jaws rise one above another flat-roofed houses straggling down upon the plain among vineyards, poplars, willows, fruit-trees, and immense walnuts and gardens. There are said to be 900 houses, but many of them are ruinous. The stream which bursts from the hills is divided into innumerable streamlets, which must clothe these gardens with beauty.

A *farāsh* riding on ahead had engaged a house, so we avoided the horrors of the immense caravanserai, crammed to-night with storm-bound caravans. The house is rough, but has three adjoining rooms, and the servants are comfortable. A fire, with its usual accompaniment of stinging smoke, fails to raise the

temperature of my room to the freezing-point, yet it is quite possible to be comfortable and employ oneself.

Mahidasht, Jan. 24.– My room at Kirrind was very cold. The ink froze. The mercury fell to 2° below zero in it, and outside in the sun was only 14° at 8.30. There was a great Babel at starting. Some men had sold four chickens for the high price of 2s. each, the current price being 6d., and had robbed the servants of two, and they took one of the mules, which was sent after us by an official. Slipping, floundering, and falling in the deep snow, and getting entangled among caravans, we rode all day over rolling levels. The distance seemed interminable over the glittering plains, and the pain and stiffness produced by the intense cold were hard to bear, and it was not possible to change the cramped position by walking. The mercury fell to 4°, as with tired animals we toiled up the slope on which Harunabad stands.

A very large caravanserai and a village of sixty houses occupy the site of a town built by Harun-al-Raschid on the upper waters of the Kerkhah. It has the reputation of being one of the coldest places in Persia, so cold that its Ilyat inhabitants desert it in winter, leaving two or three men who make a business of supplying caravans. Usually people come out of the villages in numbers as we arrive, but we passed group after group of ruinous hovels without seeing a creature. We obtained awfully cold rooms at a great height above a bazar, now deserted. I write "awfully" advisedly, for the mercury in them at sunset was 2° below zero, the floors were plaster, slippery with frozen moisture, the walls

were partly wood, with great apertures between the planks; where they were mud the blistered plaster was fringed with icicles. Later the mercury sank to 12°, and before morning to 16° below zero, and the hot water froze in my basin before I could use it!

We were to have started at eight, as there was no possible way of dividing the nine hours' march, but when the time came the *katirgis*

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.