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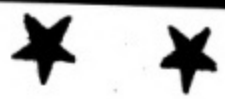

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A PARTY OF KOORDS EXERCISING.

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TRAVELS

IN

KOORDISTAN, MESOPOTAMIA,

ETC.

WITH SKETCHES OF THE CHARACTER AND MANNERS

OF THE

KOORDISH AND ARAB TRIBES.

BY J. BAILLIE FRASER, ESQ.

TWO VOLUMES IN ONE.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET,
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TRAVELS

IN

KOORDISTAN AND MESOPOTAMIA.

LETTER I.

Causes of protracted stay at Tabreez.—Healthy climate of that place.—Its environs and aspect.—Gardens.—Fruit.—Yeilaks.—Prosperity.—Causes of.—Trade.—Mahomed Meerza.—His court.—Causes of its dulness.—The Kaymookâm.—His character and power.—Visit to the Prince Royal.—Summary castigation.

Tabreez, 4th October 1834.

DEAR ——,

I NEED scarcely apologize for the comparative length of time that has elapsed between the dates of my last and present letter, nor for the conciseness of the former communication. You well know the lassitude which succeeds any long sustained effort of body or mind; and, in my case, both were so jaded by the time I reached this place, that for many days I could do little but enjoy the repose which it afforded me, and the social comforts to

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which the soul, like a long bent bow, flew back with double zest. I revelled in the full sense of liberty and security, and rejoiced in the kindness and hospitality of the many friends who were gathered here together. Our days now flow on in peace, undisturbed by many causes of excitement, although some such do occasionally occur—and, like the seaman fresh from a voyage of hardship and a dangerous shipwreck, I luxuriate in this quiet though passive enjoyment, and shrink a little from the approaching necessity of once more getting into action. My horses, poor brutes, I have no doubt do more than participate in these sedentary tastes, as they are, in fact, the great cause of so long an indulgence; for until they get into something like condition, their master cannot move. Nor are my servants, worn out with the Ghilânee fever, a bit more desirous to disturb the repose they enjoy, than the master they serve, or the beasts they tend.

Were I to select a spot the best calculated for this renovating process—for the recovery of health, or for its preservation,—I know not that I could hit upon any more suited to the purpose than Tabreez at this season, or, indeed, at any season, so far as I am aware. A brighter sky and purer air than those which the inhabitants of this town and its environs breathe and live under, can scarcely be found. To me it seems as if there truly was "health in the breeze" that blows around me. In fact, the occasional excess of this breeze is about the only drawback here to comfort, so far as atmospheric influence is concerned, for the temperature is delightful. The

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sun would be hot during the middle part of the day, but that this breeze cools his ardours effectually; and we must forgive the clouds of dust which it raises, even though they blind and choke the unfortunates whom business forces to go out during the prevalence of the gale.

During the months of June, July, and August, the heat in the town itself is no doubt considerable; but September relieves the inhabitants in part, and October, at times, is actually cold. Both heat and cold are dry and wholesome, quite unlike the stifling alternations which render Tehran and its environs so unhealthy in summer; and the evenings and mornings are at all times heavenly. What skies! what pure, brilliant ether! It is a delight to escape from the confinement of the mud walls and dusty lanes of the city, even to the broken ground beyond them; but you have no need to linger in the most disgusting part of the environs of all oriental cities, the immediate vicinity of the walls, where pits and hollows, and irregularities of every sort, burying-grounds with their mouldering tombstones and yawning graves, ruined walls and heaps of rubbish, and carrion and abominations of all descriptions conspire to sicken the passenger, and where the hurrying to and fro of mules and asses, *yaboos*, horses, and camels, loaded and unloaded, with their rude riders and ruder drivers, obstruct and perplex the paths;—no, get through all this as fast as you can, and by the shortest way, taking all possible care that you fall into no hole, slip from no treacherous bridge into the watercourse below, nor get

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lost in the labyrinth of broken enclosures into which you plunge, with intent to extricate yourself from some interminable string of camels or jackasses, loaded with weeds for fuel. If you succeed, you will probably find yourself on a fine hard open plain, where you may give your horse the rein, and permit his pent-up spirits, like your own, to have free scope, and expatiate in the mighty space around you. Then pause as you crown some gentle acclivity, and cast a backward glance on the busy scene you have quitted—on the thronged city—the abode of so much human passion and human woe—with its little sprinkling of happiness, like the seasoning of a tasteless or bitter dish.

And a fair and pleasant sight, with all its faults, you will confess Tabreez to be, as you gaze upon it from some little height to the eastward or north, just far enough removed to lose the sense of its mean mud-built houses, and the imperfections of its ill-kept walls, its old ark, and one or two minarets towering above the mingled mass of buildings and trees; for there are several gardens within the place, and a perfect forest of orchards envelope it on all sides, stretching far beyond its precincts into the plain. Then the well-known red hills, with the more distant peaks that tower above them, and the blue mountains that skirt Lake Shahee on the north, and the lofty crests of Sahund, still spotted with snow and gilt and empurpled by the rays of the setting sun, which also edges with flame a mass of low clouds resting on the distant lake; all this, mellowed and harmonized by the soft

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mysterious haze of the hour, forms a panoramic picture which, though deficient in the rich luxuriant beauty peculiar to more western climes, possesses, I assure you, a sublimity and expansive grandeur of its own, which must strike with admiration every unprejudiced observer of nature.

The gardens of Tabreez are another pleasant and fertile resource for the indwellers of the city, for their collective extent is immense, and there are many of large size, to which access is easily obtained; and if one is fond of fruit he may indulge, for the merest trifle, to the fullest excess. Give the Bâghwân, or keeper of the garden, but a single *saheb kerán*—value one English shilling, and half a dozen of you may revel in the finest peaches, the juiciest nectarines, the most luscious grapes, pears that vie with if they do not surpass in flavour, the finest Jargonelle or Bon Chrétien, or Gloux-morceaux, or any other of the most celebrated kinds of Europe; as for melons of the richest sorts, they are a drug. Fruit in Tabreez, as generally throughout Persia, is, in fact, so plentiful and cheap, that it forms a great portion of the food of the common people, who eat it in quantities that would make any of us in less prolific countries stare: for instance, a Persian thinks nothing of eating two *mauns*—that is, fourteen pounds' weight of either common or watermelon—and scrape their skins clean too. Now, calculating the seeds and offal at a third, the remainder will be a pretty sufficient allowance for one individual. How their stomachs can contain and retain so monstrous a burthen of crude vegetable

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matter, it is difficult to comprehend; but it is often not with impunity. The insulted and overtaxed organ frequently gets sulky, and refuses to perform its office, and the gormandizer is punished for his excess by a surfeit, which terminates in a severe fever. Excess in food, particularly in fruit, is, in truth, a chief cause of all the illness which prevails here—for even this favoured spot is far from being exempted from the common doom; people do get ill and die here, as in all other parts of this terrestrial globe, and perhaps there is no more pregnant cause of such afflictions than over indulgence in eating. In Persia, I am sure it is so; for though the Persians are generally temperate in their habits, they one and all are given to occasional excess, and prince and peasant suffer alike in this way from the most disgusting debauches. It is not many months since the King nearly made an end of himself, by persisting in devouring quantities of a particular favourite soup; and on my way from Khorasan, one of my guards, being furnished gratis—that is, at my expense,—with plenty of good cheer, ate, two nights running, a quantity of pillaw sufficient for five hearty men; the consequence was an illness, from which I doubt if he ever recovered. In like manner two of my own servants brought on a fever at Resht, by immoderate gluttony at a feast which they made with money I had given them. I could give many other instances within my own knowledge, but the detail would be disgusting.

To invalids a change of air is as essential as medicine, more so indeed, I should say, judging

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from personal experience, even were it from a fine atmosphere to another intrinsically less good. The inhabitants of Tabreez are blessed with the means of such a salutary change, perhaps beyond most others, for its neighbourhood abounds in delightful mountain abodes, where assuredly the air is of an unrivalled freshness and purity. About seven fursucks, or twenty-five miles, southward, in the mountains of Sahund, there is a village called Leewân, which gives its name to a pleasant valley in which runs a fine clear mountain stream. Perhaps not the least recommendation of this retreat is the fine trout with which this stream is tolerably stored, and which afford both pleasant pastime and food to those who seek its banks; and hither do the English party often repair and pitch their tents in a climate as cool and bracing as that of the mountains of Scotland or of Wales. Then in another direction there is the *Chunmun*, or natural pasture of Oojaun, where the royal camp was wont to be pitched, and where the brood mares of the prince are now kept; and there is Serâb, an elevated tract on the road to Ardebeel, with its fine trout stream; and the noble highland districts of Khalkhal and Miskeen, if you wish to go further a-field. In short, I look upon Tabreez to be the best situated, as it is in point of fact the first, of Persian cities; for though Ispahan undoubtedly covers infinitely more ground, the principal part of that ancient capital is a maze of ruins, amongst which the remaining population is thinly scattered, and there is about it an air of decay and fallen state which is exceedingly depressing. Ta-

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breez, on the contrary, is a city which is every day improving, and its population increasing; there are few or no ruins in it, but you constantly see the streets blocked up with the materials for building or repairing houses, and there reigns in it an air of bustle and prosperity which, except in Tehran, you observe nowhere in Persia, and not even there, to the same extent.

Far be it from me to insinuate that this prosperity has its origin in any uncommon advantage derived from a better system of government; in that respect neither Tabreez in particular, nor Azerbijaun in general, has much cause for rejoicing beyond the rest of the country. Abbas Meerza did indeed make some progress in fixing the revenues of the province upon a systematic scale, and, while he resided here, in enforcing their collection, but assuredly the welfare or prosperity of the Ryots were but secondary objects of his consideration, and though, while he administered affairs in person, there might be less of arbitrary exaction, every village was taxed to the utmost it could well bear. Since the time he left the province, however, and devoted himself to the subjugation of Khorasan, his government of Azerbijaun, subjected to the tyranny of his brothers, who were left in charge, had, Heaven knows, little to congratulate itself on, nor had either citizens or villagers much cause to rejoice in the tender mercies of these princes.

No, Tabreez owes its comparative prosperity to that great engine of civilization, improvement, and enrichment, commerce. It is the greatest

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trading mart in Persia. It is the *entrepôt* where meet the roads from Teflis and from Asia Minor, from east, west, north, and south, whence caravans arrive to pour the wealth of all nations into its lap. From Teflis and from Resht comes all the Russian produce which the western and southern provinces of Persia consume, together with the little foreign trade which the late absurd prohibitory tariff of Russia has left to her Georgian capital. From Erzeroom is poured in the vast and increasing stream of European manufactures—chiefly English goods, which flows to the lately opened port of Trebizond, or arrives by the more tedious land routes through Asia Minor from Constantinople; while, by the avenues and commercial channels of Persia itself, arrive the valuable productions of India, Tartary, Arabia, &c. to fill its bazaars.

Where custom-house regulations are so lax, and bribery and corruption so universal, it would be no easy matter to calculate the amount of trade which this capital enjoys; but I have little doubt, from what I could collect, that its European trade, including of course that with Russia, approaches a million sterling,* and that this is at least equalled by its Asiatic and internal commerce; and though the Dons of London, and Liverpool, and Glasgow, and Bristol, may turn up their noses at so petty a concern, let me tell them that it is a very fair amount for a country so poor and ruined as Persia, and a very pretty commencement to a traffic which,

* There are now good grounds for knowing that it exceeds this, and is annually increasing.

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so far as Great Britain is concerned, is yet in its infancy.

I fear I must have wearied you with this "descant" on Tabreez, but I have done—you need fear no elaborate account of its public buildings, for it has none worth describing. The old *ark* or citadel, perhaps the work of Caliph Haroon-ul-Rasheed, frowns in ruins over the modern city, and the remains of an ancient mosque or two are all that are seen besides from the top of its battlements, which command a most extensive view. Perhaps one of the most valuable attractions of Tabreez is, its comparatively close vicinity to Europe, and the facility it affords of getting rapidly out of "the land of Paynimrie" into Christian countries; for a run of four hundred miles, to Teflis, places you in European society and manners; a journey but little longer will carry you to Trebizond, from whence a snug vessel may waft you either to Constantinople or to England; and if you affect the speed and comforts of a Tatar trip, the road by Erzeroom through Asia Minor is open, and you may reach the fairest city of Islam at a reasonable expense of time, money, and bodily fatigue. To me, I confess, that these facilities were no trifling recommendation, as I hope in no long time to profit by them, on my return to England. England! home! what a thrill do these two little words produce in every vein! what a sudden impulse do they give the blood whenever I think on them! Let the man who growls at the fancied evils and petty annoyances that meet him there, and to which, like every child of Adam, he is

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heir, uproot himself from his native soil, quit the comforts of his home, and roam about for a while in lands like these, and if he does not learn to hate his wayward petulance, and long enthusiastically for a restoration to the blessings he has so culpably undervalued, he deserves to be doomed to perpetual wandering and banishment.

You may wonder, perhaps, that in all this effusion about Tabreez, I have omitted saying a word about the young prince whose residence it is—the heir apparent of Persia, and his court. The fact is, that at this moment there is little to be said upon the subject. Almost ever since I came here, Mahomed Meerza has been confined with a fit of the gout, and the army is absent on the frontiers of Turkey, and with it most of the officers who would have given glitter and bustle to the court. "Gout!" you will exclaim,—"a prince of Persia in the gout? what an absurd idea,—what an incongruity!" and so it is, I grant; for with a prince of Persia, or any Persian, one is apt to associate notions of slenderness and activity, gracefulness and capital horsemanship. The idea of a fat body and swollen legs, seems absolutely foreign to the creature. But Mahomed Meerza, although only twenty-eight years of age, is actually a very corpulent young man, and has, from his mother's family, a hereditary taint of gout, which has unhappily been early excited into action by the unlimited indulgence of an excellent appetite, for the most difficult task of his royal highness's medical advisers, is to induce him to be temperate in eating. Business, too, prevents him,

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while living in cities, from taking that extent of exercise which his natural disposition to fulness requires, and thus he is reminded of his excesses, and punished for them, by an occasional sharp fit of gout.

But there are other causes which tend to curtail the brilliancy of the prince's court, and of these poverty is one. He has returned from the Khorasan campaigns to an empty treasury, and to find the resources of the province, from whence it should be replenished, exhausted and forestalled by the atrocious peculations of his brothers, and certain other individuals in whom his father had placed confidence. Of the former, two, namely, Jehangeer Meerza, and Khosroo Meerza, have been sent to well-merited confinement in the fortress of Ardebeel. These young men are both so worthless that their own mother declared it impossible to tell which was the worst.

There is a yet more curious reason for the quietness of his court. The whole real power in Azerbijaun is at this moment vested in the person of the prince's prime minister, Meerza Abool Caussim, to whom I have already introduced you under the title of Kaymookâm, and with whom you may remember I had an interview at Muzeenoon. This minister, as he is one of the most prominent, is also one of the strangest characters in all Persia, nor are his manners and appearance less remarkable than his mental qualities. Conceive a man of somewhat more than middle size, exceedingly heavy and corpulent, with much rotundity of paunch, coarse fea-

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tures, small but very prominent eyes, so short-sighted as to suggest the idea of purblindness, yet keen and bright withal; a great ugly mouth garnished with long, irregular, prominent, yellow fangs, which an hideous habitual and stupid gape always exposes to view—conceive all these, and you will say that they do not compose a very promising exterior; and certainly the external attributes of the Kaymookâm would be more suitable to a stupid village boor, than to the first statesman of an empire. It is true that a good-humoured yet somewhat sarcastic smile at times brightens up the lower part of his countenance, while the upper features are illumined by a quick glance from his glimmering optics; but to my apprehension, there is unquestionably nothing in the outward appearance of the Kaymookâm to herald the talent and shrewdness which it is asserted he possesses.

Nor are his demeanour and personal habits calculated to impress strangers, Europeans at least, with more favourable ideas of his character and endowments. He can be civil and even polite when it suits his purpose, but he can be quite as impertinent and gross; and it requires a strong and steady hand to restrain him, when his devil tempts him to be insolent or abusive. Like many of the Persian great, he is a monstrously foul feeder, and his feats in devouring melons and cucumbers, as commonly related, seem utterly incredible. I have heard, for instance, of his gobbling up seven mauns, or fifty pounds of melons at a sitting, and it is certain that he indulges in this way to such an excess,

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as to be for a time incapable of moving. A gentleman once, in passing over the ground where his excellency had been encamped with a military force, towards the Turkish border, observed a temporary tent formed of some spears stuck in the ground and covered with a few horse-cloths and great coats. On riding up to see who could be there, he discovered that it was the minister, who, having gorged so much of a favourite sort of melon that he could not move, had been placed by his attendants under this temporary shelter, erected for the purpose, until his excellency should be able to proceed.

As a man of business he stands unequalled in public estimation for universal talent. He is an able financier; understands, and it is asserted can regulate and command, the resources of the country —is well acquainted with the condition of every province; and none, they say, comes near him in knowledge of foreign relations and management of foreign policy. But that for which he is most celebrated—I had almost said notorious,—is the art of political intrigue, so much admired by Persians, and, more shame to the age, not less encouraged in civilized Europe; the art, in other words, of cheating others—of making them believe what the intriguer desires, however wide of the truth, to serve his own purposes—of deceiving and lying through thick and thin to compass the ends he has in view.

No one who knows the Kaymookâm expects a word of truth from him, and thus it happens, that even when the honest gentleman may find it his interest to stick to facts, he seldom meets with credit. Yet

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it is strange how easily so well-known a deceiver does manage to create the impression he desires to make—men are so easily gulled with fair words. It is a principle with the Kaymookâm never to deny any one a request, so that he contrives to send petitioners from his presence soothed and contented, if not confident; for if you ask these very persons how they came to give credit to his fair words, they will reply, "We do not believe them, we don't give credit to a word he has said," and yet they leave him obviously pleased and elevated with this gaseous food.

That so systematic a deceiver should expect deception on the part of others is but natural, and, accordingly, we find the Kaymookâm to be the most suspicious of mortals. He can confide in no one, and consequently is forced to perform, or at least to undertake, all manner of business himself, both in gross and in detail. In affairs of political consequence, he will admit of no participation or assistance; for instance, not a soul has been privy to what has passed in the course of certain important negotiations which he has been carrying on of late with the minister of Russia; he receives, reads, and answers all letters connected with them himself. The consequence of this absurd monopoly is obvious; nine-tenths of all that should be done is left unaccomplished, and that which is done, in spite of his great talents as a writer, is imperfectly executed. Of all his qualifications, whether natural or acquired, there is none, next perhaps to his talents as a statesman,—that is, political intriguer,—on

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which he values himself more than his skill at the pen, both in expression and in handwriting — a great object of ambition to learned Persians. He considers himself the first scribe of his day, and freely boasts of it: he confesses himself a personal coward. "I *am* a coward, I admit it," he is wont to say; "I hate your swords and guns, and fighting; but show me the man who will match me at the pen: I will fight him at that as long as he pleases;" and, it is true, the minister is by constitution, physically and politically, a coward — never was so timid a mortal, though at the pen he is as bold as a lion. He is, moreover, naturally indolent — it is only necessity that stimulates him to activity. Thus, when he has contrived to bustle through one affair, he is so delighted with the breathing-time it gives him, that the application of some powerful impulse is required to set him to work again. The increasing press of business sometimes overwhelms him so that he flies to his *underoon*, or to his bath, for refuge, and there endeavours to keep the enemy at bay till he can dispose of the most urgent matters. But even there the roar of neglected suitors will penetrate, and he suddenly escapes to a distant village to avoid his persecutors: in vain, they are at his heels; he dashes off to another — there is no rest; his own people are constrained to join the hue and cry, and, wearied out and in despair, he at length returns to his own quarters, and abandons himself to the badgering, which can no longer be shunned.

The consequences of this miserable system are

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frightful, injustice of all sorts to a terrible extent prevails, and such an outcry is raised against himself and his master, that I cannot imagine that the thing can long go on. With regard to the court, the state of which gave rise to this essay on the Kaymookâm's character, the effect produced is remarkable; for the Prince is placed by his minister in a complete state of surveillance. No one can approach his person without permission of the Kaymookâm; and few like to rouse a jealousy that may be fatal to themselves by evincing any desire to be much near the person of their sovereign. Hence that sovereign is almost deserted, and little of state or pomp appears either in or about the palace.

On my arrival at Tabreez, it was judged proper and respectful to announce my return from Khorassan, and my disposition to wait upon his Excellency so soon as he might have leisure to receive me. The reply was, that he had a great deal to say to me, and would see me as soon as he could find a moment disengaged. That moment, however, not having been announced in the course of the ensuing week, I sent to his Excellency some papers, which it had been my intention to deliver personally, with a message expressive of my regret that I should probably have to leave the country without an opportunity of paying him my respects. This produced two appointments running, both of which failed. A third led me to his house one morning about seven o'clock.

The servants told me that their master was in

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the bath. "Oh, very well," replied I, "then I'm off. I can't wait here two hours on the mere chance of seeing your master." But they entreated me to stay, as their master would never forgive them if they permitted me to go, &c. and promised that I should not have to wait above half an hour. So I followed them into a poor small apartment, having a table, with six or eight English chairs ranged around it. I had taken the precaution of bringing some business to occupy me in case of detention, and after being thus employed for half an hour, a servant brought me a caleeoon. I asked him when his master was coming. "In about an hour he will come out of the bath," replied he. "Then I will wait no longer," said I, and rose to go. "No, no, no," exclaimed he, earnestly, "don't go; the Kaymookâm will be here in a few minutes;" so again I sat down, and in about fifteen minutes, the bustle of servants and shuffling of slippers announced the great man's approach.

In the mean time, however, the court before the windows had become full of people of all sorts and degrees, Khans, Begs, Moollahs, Meerzas, merchants, soldiers, peasants, messengers going, and messengers returning, &c. all of whom had some petition to present, or some request to prefer, and to all of whom, with exemplary patience, did his Excellency address some compliment or word of salutation, while, with a patience no less praiseworthy, did I stand at the window watching the progress of this comet with the great tail. At length, his eye fell on me, and incontinently did there issue

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from his mouth a whole volley of compliments and inquiries in the Persian fashion, with many assurances that "my place had long been empty;" that "I had brought light to his eyes," and that "he had a thousand things to say to me." He then entered the room, scattering compliments like flowers on all sides, took a chair, ordering another to be placed near his own for me—made all the world sit down; turned to me, and, taking a roll of paper from a secretary, began instantly to write upon it fast, fast, leaving me with my mouth half agape to catch the expected communication, and prepare for my reply.

This farce was continued for a considerable time, when up started a fellow at the bottom of the room with a long story about some money he had been sent to collect, but which he swore a dozen men and more along with him, would not be able to wrest from the people. His clamour or energy, to give it no stronger name, aroused the minister's attention; up went the eye from the paper as if awakened from a dream, and began to blink at the man; but he instantly entered on the business, heard the statement, and directed what was to be done with infinite minuteness. The spell thus broken, papers and notes without number were thrust into the hands of two attendants, who passed them with ludicrous rapidity into the great man's hand. He took them mechanically, as it seemed, and began to read them. His manner of performing this operation is most curious. From extreme short-sightedness, he cannot distinguish a letter unless

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the writing be within an inch of his eye; so he draws the paper backwards and forwards, or up and down the range of that organ, touching his very nose; but as his sight, when the object is within proper range, is extremely quick, the sense of a piece of writing is gathered with a celerity that seems like intuition; and the mechanical part of the business is performed so rapidly, that one would swear he was gravely rubbing his nose with a piece of paper, instead of reading a letter.

Such was his occupation for a good half hour, attending to no one except those who came into the room, when, being informed by an attendant of their name and rank, he always politely requested them to be seated. As for me, I sat patiently and much amused, watching the scene, until an Italian physician, with whom I had some acquaintance, came in, and, observing how his Excellency was occupied, gave me a smile, and asking, as much as to say, "Ah, if this is the case, no hope for us." Of this I had become convinced, and availed myself of the little bustle his entrance had occasioned to ask my leave, observing that his Excellency had obviously *now* no leisure to listen to *my* communications. But "No, no, no!" exclaimed his Excellency, rapidly, "not at all — you must not go: I have a great deal to say; and, see, I am quite ready." So he drew my chair closer, jerking his own, at the same time, nearer to mine, and there we sat, poking our heads at each other in the most confidential-looking attitude, till they almost touched. But the fates were adverse; scarcely had his proe-

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mium commenced, when a fresh handful of the vile little notes were again thrust forward. His Excellency rejected them. "Don't you see that I am engaged with the Saheb?" said he to the secretary, in a voice of remonstrance and entreaty, rather than of anger. The secretary smiled, and withdrew the notes. "And what am *I* to do then, your Excellency?" roared out some Gholaum or Beg, who, with shulwars on, and all his riding geer, was standing at the bottom of the room waiting to be despatched; "here am I delayed all this time." The look which this appeal attracted to the speaker was almost instantly diverted to another person, evidently the messenger of some great man, who, in more respectful guise, yet also at the top of his voice demanded, "And what reply to the Khan's letter, my lord? He fully expects an immediate answer."—"And let me represent to your Excellency," said an attendant in a low voice, "that *this* petition requires instant attention." The poor Kaymookâm looked infinitely distressed, fidgeted on his chair, gazed vacantly first at the note, then at the attendant, as if to see whether he could still evade his fate; then, like the fascinated animal which reluctantly but helplessly throws itself into the snake's jaws, seized the paper, and skimmed its contents. It was but the signal for a general and overpowering attack. Ere a reply had been given to the first, a dozen of other papers were thrust forth, and mechanically grasped as before. His Excellency cast at me a deprecatory look, to which I replied with a bow, dissolving at the same

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time the close union of our chairs. The battle was plainly lost.

"The horses are ready, your Excellency, and the road is long; the sun is getting hot," said an attendant accoutred for riding, who now appeared at the door, and who doubtless had been from the first ordered to come thus to the rescue. It was the signal for breaking up. "I am really very sorry, Saheb Fraser," said his Excellency to me,—"I am quite ashamed on your account; but forgive me that I am forced to go — there are some of the Princes, &c. waiting for me. I am greatly ashamed; but, *inchallah*, on my return I have much to say and to hear." I uttered a few *astafferullahs!* and *inchallahs!* in their proper places, in reply to these self-condemnatory and civil expressions of the great man, and made my bow with a "May your favour never diminish!"—"*Khodah humraee shumah! Khodah nigahdârit!*"—May God be with you! may he watch over you!" responded he, and we separated, and thus terminated this strange interview. It was no disappointment to me, for I had nothing to ask nor expect — I had to give and not receive information; in fact, as to worming information out of the Kaymookâm, no one ever dreams of it; if he did, he would be like him that went to gather wool, but came back shorn — he would surely be well pumped himself.

But such is exactly his conduct with others on occasions of still more importance, however pressing may be the business. Even when he can be induced to make a *khelwut*, or private audience, for

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a special purpose, his eunuchs, privileged persons, constantly bring in vile little notes, which he as constantly reads, at times pulling out his pen-case and answering them, to the total interruption of the business on hand. To such an extent does this go, that I have known the gentlemen of our mission forced to break up their appointed interviews, when thus interrupted, in order to testify their sense of the impropriety of such conduct when practised towards them: such is the stuff of which ministers are sometimes made in Persia; thus are her affairs now managed and her hopes of improvement crushed —and thus is it like to continue, unless some powerful influence be exerted to put her affairs to rights.

I have not yet mentioned that our party of Europeans has been greatly reduced of late, by the departure of the greater part of our detachment of officers for the Persian camp, which, as I have said, is now on the Turkish frontier, in order to bring to a settlement, by a demonstration of force, certain disputes connected with the respective claims of each country, on certain tribes of Koordish Eeliauts —wanderers in more senses than one, for, living on the border, upon any cause of dissatisfaction, real or imaginary, from either government, off they go across the frontiers into the territories of the neighbouring state, and set at nought the claims of that in which they may previously have been living.

While these gentlemen were with us, our British party was strong, mustering, with sergeants and all, about forty persons; and what with sporting parties and dinner parties, we made it out very pleasantly.

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But we are now shorn of our beams, and, as is often the case, in such communities, where all men have some specific duty to attend to, a general break up is in the course of occurrence. Thus Macneill has left us at a *moment's* warning. The commandant of the detachment next, and four of his officers are sent to camp; then unfortunate *I* am just about to get another kick, which will set me a-spinning like a tee-totum for several months, and so it fares—fresh faces come and go—"*come* like shadows, so depart!"

Macneill's departure was to me a painful affair, for with him I lost the aid and counsel of my best friend; circumstances rendered it necessary that a most confidential person should, at this time, proceed to England with all speed; and, accordingly, to the no small surprise of the British residents here, from whom, as well as from others, the measure had, for sufficient reasons, been kept secret, that gentleman's place was one fine morning, in Persian phrase, "found empty." At early dawn I called on him, and found him cramming his baggage into Tatars' bags. In two hours I shook hands with him—saw him mounted on one of my dear old friends, the *chupper* horses—and off he went, followed by the good wishes of all the party, when they knew of his intended journey. It was one of those rapid movements which takes us by surprise—one of those sudden events which sometimes change the face of the most monotonous societies, and rouse those within its circle of operation, only to plunge them into deeper dulness than before; nor were matters improved by the desertions that followed.

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A few days ago I accompanied the envoy to visit the Prince—the heir apparent of the kingdom. He received us in a rather handsome apartment, plainly dressed, and sitting upon a chair, of which four others were placed for our party. He was perfectly gracious, and apparently desirous to make himself agreeable to us all; but such visits are always stiff, and the thick and rapid enunciation of his Royal Highness renders it very difficult for a stranger to follow what he says. His countenance is handsome and gracious, but his person, even already, is so fat that he promises to become a monster of corpulence. His disposition, though inclined to indolence, is amiable; but like many such tempers, when roused becomes as violent and determined as it had previously been mild or irresolute. An instance of this occurred the other day, when, on occasion of a scarcity of bread, some Moollah, who had made himself very busy, came into the Prince's presence, and forgot himself so far as to speak with disrespect, and even with rudeness. The Prince bore it for some time, but at length, roused to anger, started up and ordered his attendants to take and strangle the man instantly; a sentence which was executed on the spot. A similar doom was nearly inflicted upon a man of some rank, only the other day. He was a chief of Karadagh, who had been rather addicted to taking liberties with other men's necks, and plundering and pillaging a little on his own account. I do not recollect the precise exciting cause, but he had been endeavouring to excuse his own deeds to the Prince, in a manner which appears to have produced an

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effect directly opposite to that intended; for his Royal Highness, getting into a fury, ordered the Furoshes to tie a rope about the chief's own neck, and drag him for a while about the yard. This operation was performed till the man became insensible, when one of the officers in presence, unbuckling his sword, placed it in the hands of the executioners, as a pledge of reward, provided he would desist till his Royal Highness should be entreated to pardon the culprit. The pardon was granted at the officer's request, but the culprit's recovery from the rude treatment he had undergone was long doubtful.

I must close this rambling epistle, as there is a messenger which may possibly catch Macneill, and I must now set about preparing for my journey to Baghdad, in right earnest. Adieu!

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LETTER II.

Travelling reflections and preparations.—Dinner with the Kaymookâm.—Details of a guest establishment.—Habits of a Minisnister of State.—Rocket practice.—Leave Tabreez.—Deeza-Khaleel.—Tessouje.

12th October, Tessouje, a village on the Lake Shahee.

DEAR ——,

I REPLIED in a very hurried manner to your letters of —— . . . . They found me, as I told you, in the bustle of departure, and somewhat depressed at the prospect of quitting my good friends here to commence another long and toilsome journey. I am one of those who think a good thing is all the better of being enjoyed in company with a friend. "What a fine thing," exclaims some French author, "is solitude! if we had but some one with us, to whom we might say, 'how beautiful is solitude!'" and so in my opinion is it with travelling. Without a companion to interchange ideas with, to whom we can communicate our ideas with hope of sympathy, the finest country and the grandest scenery at length cease to interest. And when, in addition to the want of such companion, there exist causes of care and anxiety, travelling, like solitude, becomes but a sorry amusement.

I know that such a confession will be hooted at

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by the young and ardent, whose fiery zeal bids defiance alike to the chill of doubt, and the depressing influence of anxiety and loneliness; and the day has been when to roam about, almost at will, over countries wild and wide, with just enough of hazard and uncertainty to correct the tameness of perfect security, and with the chance, if not the certainty, of almost daily adventures, would have been ecstacy! the very height of romantic delight;—

"Bound where thou wilt, my barb; or speed my prow;
Be but the star that guides my wanderings;—"

love of adventure, if you will—danger for danger's-sake. But the sad realties of life have a good deal tempered this quixotic spirit. The hand of time, in passing over the mind, sobers the imagination as it whitens the hair. In speculation, it is true, these pictures of the fancy still wear a fascinating hue, as the most rugged *mountains*, seen from a distance, display the most bewitching effects—as reading of dangers and adventures charms the happy inmates of the comfortable drawing-room round their blazing fire. But let the rapt admirer of the picturesque ascend these same mountains of purple and gold, and his gay visions will vanish; let the fire-side traveller leave his slippers on the hearth, put on his boots and cloak, and *mounting* his horse, ride alone for days and nights in snow, and rain, and sun; resting, when he does rest, in stables and huts, or taking his brief nap with the sky alone for his covering, and I will engage, be he young and ardent as he may, his romance will not last six months.

It was with something of these feelings, still

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chafed and raw from my disagreeable campaign in Mazunderan and Ghilân, and not improved by the near approach of another rough journey with men and cattle but half recovered from their late hard service, that I replied to your letters, in a tone, I fear, not the most cheerful or grateful for their contents . . . . But all these things are past, and here I am, having fairly quitted Tabreez, seated in a queer but not uncomfortable room in this fine village. We have not, however, quite done with that city, and I think, at the hazard of worrying you, I must give you another touch of the Kaymookâm, and tell you of a dinner-party to which he did me the honour to invite me. I hope you are not yet quite weary of this personage, for the scene was so characteristic, that I cannot refrain from bestowing upon you whatever tediousness it may possess.

Being given to understand that it was his Excellency's intention to make sure of an interview, and provide against the frequent interruptions which had hitherto taken place, by giving me a dinner in private some evening before I left the city, I deferred my departure for a day after all had been arranged, and at the time appointed, which was half an hour after sunset, rode to the minister's house. I was shown into the same room as before, which was lighted up with wax tapers; for I found that his Excellency is as sensitive to the gross smell of mutton fat, as any fine lady in England, and can detect an expiring candle or other vile greasy smell, at any distance, as well as Sister ——. These torches were lighted on my entrance, and in no long time after-

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wards his Excellency made his appearance with his usual cordial and familiar greeting. In a minute or two we were both seated, and as he informed me that the present *private* meeting (*khelwut*) had been contrived as amends for former failures, one might have imagined the time had come for commencing, without loss of time, the inquiries I knew he had to make. But such was far from being the case.

No sooner had he seated himself and dismissed his attendants, including two very pretty boys, a son and grandson of his own, and given particular orders that he should not be interrupted, than, fixing his chin upon a gold-headed cane, which he held in both hands, and poking out his feet far from below his petticoats, he addressed the only man remaining, his *Nâzir*, or steward, and told him to go to certain of his guests whom he named, and bid them a thousand welcomes, and make as many apologies on his part, for not having yet been able to wait on them himself. "Tell them," said he, "that for the last three days one or other of the Princes have always been with me in the evening, and to-night I am occupied with this Feringee Saheb; but see that they are well attended to; be sure they have all they want."

"And who have I at present in the house?" continued he, inquiring of his servant; "what guests have I?—who have come to-day?" The Nâzir replied by reciting a long string of names which would in no wise edify you to hear, but to which his master listened attentively; "and where is such a one

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lodged?" demanded he; and the question being also replied to, he went through the whole number, remarking on the propriety of the location of each respectively, and desiring that this Khan should have such a suite of rooms, and this Beg such an *outagh*, or chamber, and another such a *delldn*, or *balakhaneh*; and the tone in which the matter was discussed, showed that it was a subject of customary inquiry.

Nor were the other wants of these numerous guests less a matter of solicitude and arrangement. One person, for instance, had been regularly furnished with food for himself and his servants, but provision for his horses had not been made: the minister desired the omission to be rectified. Another had his own cook, to whom the requisite articles were to be furnished for his master's use, and who was to prepare them in a place specially pointed out by his Excellency. Another had been regularly supplied with two *dowrees*, or trays of victuals from the minister's own kitchen; but no breakfast had hitherto been sent, and that was to be rectified. "And what sherbet do you send with so-and-so's dinner; is it sweet or sour?" The Nâzir replied, but not, it seems, satisfactorily, for the minister directed that henceforth the sweet sherbet should have souring, either lemon-juice or *ábcooreh* (juice of sour grapes); "and let his breakfast consist of one bowl of *yekhnee* (soup), one stew, and a dish of pillaw, with fruit and sweatmeats: do you hear? And add another dish of pillaw to —— Khan's dinner. Where did you say he lodged?"—"In such a *ba-*

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lakhaneh," replied the Nâzir. "That won't do," said his Excellency; "he must be accommodated in the little suite near the great *sherbet khaneh*."—"But so and so of your Highness's family have these rooms," said the Nâzir. "That is no matter," replied his master, "let the Khan be put there; we must find room for my people elsewhere: our guests must be made comfortable, at all rates. What has he for dinner, did you say?" The Nâzir mentioned the dishes. "That won't do neither," said the minister; "you must get lamb pillaw for him."—"There is no lamb to be had," said the Nâzir. "What! none?"—"None, sir, but a few pet-lambs, which sell at an enormous price."—"Never mind the price, man; he must have lamb, I tell you: and so-and-so must have chickens."—"Chickens are scarce, too," said the steward; "I have only got seven for your Highness's self, from the village, and three of them are too lean to be sent up."—"Then send the fat ones to the Khan, and keep the lean ones for me. Where have you put —— Khan, who came the day before yesterday?"—"As yet, sir, he sleeps on the roof of the house, but as the nights get cool, we shall lay his mattress on the room below."—"What bed-clothes have you given him?"—"A mattress, with two down pillows and a fine chintz *lahoff*, (coverlit)."—"That 's right: and his people? Allee Beg—where does he sleep?"—"They all sleep out, I don't know where."—"Why, has the Beg a wife here?"—"No, sir, but there are so many—five or six of them, and I thought it would hardly do for them to sleep all together

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in one small room, so I let them find lodgings without."

In this fashion did this singular Minister of State run on for the best part of an hour, discussing circumstantially all the details necessary for the entertainment of a multitude of guests, even to the minutest trifles, ordering for each the fare, lodging, and attendance, suited to his rank; for one, sherbets and dishes of superior delicacy; for another, ordinary victuals; for some, the rice of Ooroomia; for others, that of Miskeen; while the delicate *Amberboo*, or amber-scented rice of Mazunderan, was reserved for the most highly honoured. The same attention was bestowed on the furniture of their apartments, which were to be laid with carpets of Herât, or Maragha, or Mishkabad, according to the rank and circumstances of the tenants, nor was any expense to be spared.

There can be no doubt of the absurdity of a Minister of State occupying his precious time in such petty details; yet in themselves they are more important than you might at first imagine, for, in Persia, the manner of lodging and furnishing guests is as much a matter of etiquette as the arrangement of visits or seats in an assembly: each must be treated according to his rank, and the dishes, and sherbets, and carpets, &c. are carefully graduated accordingly. Were such not the case, umbrage and discontent would be the consequence; and the Kaymookâm told an English gentleman who, like me, heard him at this work, that every man in Persia who entertains many guests as he does, is

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forced to do the same. On that occasion the Kaymookâm inquired how many were to dine with him that day? "Six," replied the Nâzir, repeating the names. His Excellency discussed the claims of each individual separately, and it appeared that, according to strict etiquette, only two of the whole could meet each other at his table, so the rest were put off till another day.

To me the whole affair sounded very much like ostentation; but that the minister has an immense establishment for guests and always well filled, is certain. His house is a sort of general rendezvous for all strangers of a certain rank, and his *mehman-khaneh*, (establishment for guests) is on a scale to correspond with such resort. I have heard it said that no less than fifty-eight Khans and their suites were his guests some time ago, upon no extraordinary occasion. All this, of course, entails an enormous outlay, and the expenses of his *mehman-khaneh* alone, are stated at 45,000 tomâns a year, or 22,500*l.* sterling. As one item, I was informed he had two hundred and eighty sets of spare bed-clothes for guests, together with carpets and *furshes* (numuds and mattresses) in proportion. Whether the Prince allows him anything in aid towards this immense expenditure I know not, but the outlay is all in cash, or what is equivalent, namely, corn and straw, sheep, butter, rice, &c. the produce of his villages.

At length these weighty matters were dismissed, and the Kaymookâm, dismounting from his chair, but telling me to keep mine, squatted himself down

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upon the carpet, and pulling out his pencase and several large rolls of paper, took up his usual strong position for writing, by throwing himself forward on his breast, and wrote several notes. Next came the examination of a whole bundle of letters, and then, after the lapse of nearly two hours from my first arrival, he turned to me, and told me he had long wished to speak to me in private, though from his numerous engagements, he had not hitherto been able; but that now there were several things regarding which he expected information, and that I must tell him the truth, and the whole truth.

Then came a long string of questions, for which I was quite prepared, though I was scarcely so for the positive manner in which he insisted upon having, and clearly desired to have, the full and real state of each case. His questions related chiefly to the state of the provinces of Khorasan, and my opinions concerning that, and the conduct of the persons left in charge there by him; and as this was a theme on which I had little agreeable to say, I should have been better pleased to remain silent. But this would not do with the Kaymookâm. He saw my embarrassment, and frequently said, "Now, Fraser Saheb, I want the *truth*; remember, from you I expect it, and have no scruple in coming out with the whole of it." Thus conjured, I had nothing left but to give my true sentiments, clothed in language as inoffensive as I could find. The task was a painful one, but my duty was clear, and as there was a hope of some good result, I resolved to perform it at all hazard or sacrifice.

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Our conversation was long; frequently the minister would retire, as it were, into himself, and continue absorbed in thought for many minutes. But after a good while, the Adjutant-General of the army came in, and with him he began discussing the clothing of certain regiments, and entered into the most minute conceivable detail of the fabrication of a serbâz's coat—how much cloth it would require—how *many* quarters and half quarters, more or less, would be wanted for a vest of some new pattern; whether *châroks*, or laced brogues, or boots, or Russian shoes, would be cheapest and best for the soldier in a winter's campaign, and a thousand similar particulars, into which he went with the greatest possible seeming gravity and interest. I could not help suspecting that these details were entered into, before me, in order to impress me with a high notion of his Excellency's care for the comfort of the troops.

All this time, too, his Excellency was roaring out for dinner, which seemed to have been adjourned "*sine die*." Interruptions too, began to increase. As a besieged fortress that has long withstood the assault of its foes at length begins to yield, or as a battered and long wave-tossed vessel gives way and admits the water by a thousand chinks—or, take any other simile you like better, provided it be sufficiently hackneyed—so did the doors of the Kaymookâm's *khelwut* at length give way to the crowd which, even at this hour of the night, besieged them, and in rushed a crowd of Meerzas, or secre-

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taries and writers, with their girdles almost bursting with enormous bundles of papers. The minister cast a desponding glance at the irrepressible inroad, and began mechanically to take and read, in his strange way, whatever was set before him; some received their orders and were bundled off, and others were told to reserve their budgets till a later hour. But there was one cool, determined fellow, who roundly taxed the great man with having mislaid a paper of consequence, on account of the absence of which Meerza such-a-one was ready to go distracted. In vain did his Excellency deny all knowledge of the document; his accuser respectfully but pertinaciously stuck to the charge—was it not in his Excellency's pockets? or might it not have been left in his cast-off clothes of that day? "No, no, I tell you no!" declared his Excellency, impatiently; "I have none of it—I know nothing of it—I am as wild about it as Meerza such-a-one can be;" and then, as if in bravado, he commenced in an angry, huffy manner, to jerk out the contents of certain receptacles termed pockets, which, for dimensions, would have beaten those of good old C——, and out came a mass of letters and papers that would have covered an acre of ground—they would have set up a petty grocer or snuff-seller for ever—when, behold! to his Excellency's infinite discomfiture, last of all, just as if it had stuck there on purpose, like Hope in Pandora's box, out came the very paper that had caused all the rumpus. It was finding the needle in the haystack, with a wit-

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ness; and foolish enough did his Excellency look, as he handed it to the other, who, with very good tact, permitted no emotion to be visible, save that of joy, at finding the document.

The disgorged contents of the sack-like pockets then came necessarily into play, and the arrangement of them occupied another twenty minutes. During the clearing of this chaos, dinner was produced, and a very good one it proved, although you may scruple a little at the necessity I was under of eating it with my fingers. And well did the Kaymookâm do the honours *à la mode de Perse*. There was no other guest but the Adjutant-General, Hoossein Khan, and plentifully did his Excellency heap our plates—for plates, instead of flaps of bread, he insisted on setting before us—I suppose in compliment to me. Observing me tugging away, rather ineffectually, with my fingers at some ornithological specimen, either chicken or partridge — a tough biped whatever its specific distinction—he called out "That's not good! here's a better one!" and seizing by the stiff shank another unhappy sufferer, from the breast of which half the flesh had been torn by his own talons, he conveyed it to my plate and deposited it on the top of the other. "May your favour never diminish!" said I, addressing myself to tear its carcass in sunder. "Here's pickled peppers —do you eat them?" inquired his Excellency, and plunging his hand into the dish, clutched a quantity and scattered them over the wreck upon my plate, before I could reply. "May your wealth increase!" said I, and began to munch the peppers. In like

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manner did he practically recommend all the viands, till at length we came to what you might call the dessert. This consisted of a vast tray of melons, his Excellency's favourites, as I have told you. They were the best Tabreez could produce, of course, and many of them had a flavour that would have won a medal from the horticultural society. But the Kaymookâm is a nice judge, and so more than a dozen were cut open for him to try. Don't be shocked at the extravagance,—they scarcely cost three halfpence a piece: *all* were tasted, two or three approved of and gobbled up, and a few more left to trifle over. This finished the dinner; and if his Excellency, like Sertorius, had dined in the scale of a balance, so as to weigh his food, the amount of increase would have been alarming. Indeed the huge vessel seemed to feel the cargo it had taken in, for in rising from the attitude of feeding, it rolled heavily, like a deep-loaded ship in a gale of wind.

Before we had well finished, the room began to fill again, and I thought business was about to recommence, as turning to one of the by-standers he said, "Well, what for to-morrow?" This must be to-morrow's first job, no doubt, said I to myself; his Excellency is going to rest, I presume, or to his harem—I must take leave. But no—"I think we should have some lamb," resumed his Excellency; "ay, some lamb pillaw." The deuce! thought I—what is he at now—the *mehmankhaneh* again? No, the man to whom he spoke was a *peish-khidmut*, and the mighty affair was his Excellency's next

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day's dinner. "Yes," went he on musing, "and let us have some *bâdinjâns* (vegetable eggs) dressed with *mâs* (sour milk) and two *côreish's* (stews); and mind the sour sauce is not spoiled—let so many onions be put in it, and three—ay, three, or even four cups of vinegar—there will be no harm; yes, that will do;" and so went he on naming the dishes to be prepared, and even the sauces, to the minutest particular. I own I was not only disgusted but provoked: so far, however, as I was concerned the affair was terminated. The room was by this time inundated with a crowd of khans, begs, meerzas, eunuchs, &c. all with papers in hand or business in mouth, and I took the first opportunity to ask for leave to depart. "You are going, then," said he; "have you nothing to ask of me?"—"Nothing," replied I, "but a continuation of your Excellency's favour, and your commands, if you have any, for me to execute in my new journey. I will gladly do what I can to promote your views and those of his Royal Highness, so far as my humble power extends."—"Many thanks," said his Excellency," nothing but to keep your eyes open and look about you, and bring me correct information of all you see and hear. You have *spoken* little to me, but you have *said* a great deal, and I have understood it and will attend to it, for I am sure it is true. When you saw me silent and thoughtful before dinner, I was not inattentive,—I was weighing what you had said; and now do not forget to send me all sort of information and write me, *in English*,—you understand." As I rose to bid him adieu two

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men, one on each side, took him under the arms to raise him, in spite of my *astafferullahs!* It was partly a piece of state, partly necessary from the effects of his excessive meal, and notwithstanding my entreaties to the contrary, he went with me to the door, to the astonishment and horror, I dare say, of many of those who witnessed it. So polite do circumstances make the greatest of men in Persia, and probably elsewhere! His Excellency desired my good word, thought he could make use of me, and paid this price to secure one whom otherwise he would not have condescended to notice—such is the way of the world.

The only other event worth mentioning at Tabreez, during my stay, was an experiment in rocket-firing, conducted in the presence of the Prince Royal by a gentleman who had brought out a parcel of Congreve's rockets with the expectation of disposing of them to his Royal Highness. The tenth was the day appointed; and though it was that also of my intended departure, I sent off my baggage and agreed to remain, in order to witness the scene, and follow it next morning.

It was exceedingly pretty. The Prince, with many of his family and a considerable suite, were on the ground to see the effects of this new missile, which though they did not assuredly act with the full precision which their owner anticipated and gave reason to expect, proved themselves at least a formidable, if not always a very manageable weapon in the hands of skilful artillerists. His Royal Highness was in high spirits, and after the practice

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the whole cavalcade, of full two thousand horsemen, rode forward to look at the places where the balls had struck the hill side. On the way we started a poor hare, and there being two greyhounds belonging to some of the party which saw and gave chase, off started every *Feringee* after them, including two grave missionaries, who had come forth to see the unhallowed experiments. Away, away scowered every one, like madcaps, Elchee, officers and all, heedless of Prince or Khan, and a very pretty chase it was, especially as the hare took up a steep hill-face just opposite, on which the dogs turned her several times. Up they all went, scrambling and sprawling away, all but your humble servant, who, having a long ride and journey close in view, did not think it quite prudent to blow his horses, so I stopped at the foot, in spite of my steed's eagerness, and saw the whole scramble. The sight of some dozen Franks and their servants, scowering away like devils on horseback up the hill-face, formed a curious contrast to the gravity of the Prince and his thousands, who never altered their staid and stately pace, and swept like a dark cloud slowly and gradually up the steep ascent, devouring it, as it were, in their progress.

On the other side the course had been short; moving round the extremity of the hill, I saw the little knot of my countrymen at a standstill some five hundred yards distant. Poor puss had been killed, the excitement was over, and we all wended slowly back to join his Royal Highness, who, I dare say, must have been a good deal amused, though

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not astonished at this burst of Frank enthusiasm for the chase. We then were entertained by the evolutions and exercise of some Koordish horsemen, who practised with the spear and skirmished before the line all the way to the gardens that surround the city. This, my last evening at Tabreez, terminated in a very pleasant dinner at the Envoy's, when I bade adieu to a society of friends whom I shall ever regard with attachment and interest.

The amusements of the evening had detained me so late that I willingly accepted the Envoy's kind offer of using his horses for the first stage, and sending on my own to await me there; so, mounting by sunrise, I turned my back on the spot where I had spent near a month of very welcome repose, and rode straight on to the village of Mayan, where my people and the baggage had spent the preceding night. There, taking my own horses, I pushed forward to Deeza-khaleel, a fine thriving village, where about three in the afternoon I found my people had procured me quarters. It was pleasant in riding through this village, with its orchards and gardens, which occupied half-an-hour, to remark the apparent prosperity of the place, and the riches, not to say comfort of its inhabitants. It occupies the borders of a fine mountain stream from the range on the north of Lake Shahee, or Ooroomia, and with its gardens covers a very extensive tract of ground.

Next morning at sunrise we were in the saddle, and I know not how it was, but I never enjoyed the first early hours of a march more. There is nothing

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more curious and unaccountable than the variations of spirits and feelings to which we are subject at times, without any obvious cause. Do they depend on internal or external agencies? mental oscillations or peculiar states of the atmosphere? The morning of this day was not one bit more lovely, nor could the air be more balmy than those had been on many a previous one; and yet, on leaving Deezakhaleel, I was conscious of a mental buoyancy which was in strong contrast to the depression under which I had laboured for the few preceding days; perhaps, it was only reaction after the existence of an unusual state of mind. All seemed smiling and delightful; the lights and shadows on the surrounding mountains, inexpressibly soft and beautiful, and the blue of the lake as it rose into view could not have been surpassed by that of any Italian piece of water any more than the azure of the heavens above us could be exceeded by the tints of an Italian sky. There was a harmony in all the scene which suited well with the peaceful occupations of the peasantry, who were pursuing their field labours in perfect security.

It is now the season of preparation for the great wheat sowing. This goes on during the whole of September and October, and multitudes of ploughs were at work breaking up the fat soil, while the labourers were employed in turning streams of water into the ground thus torn up, and breaking down the heavy clods with their spades, so as to fit it for receiving the seed. I must say, however, that the husbandry everywhere is most slovenly, and that

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with such a subject to work on, a good English farmer would make a very different thing of it and produce very different results. You never see manure applied except upon melon or cucumber grounds near a town; and, in fact, the dung of animals, though carefully collected, is not applied to this purpose, but used for winter fuel. I this day observed several boys and women carefully collecting manure where a flock of sheep had lain a night or two before; but it was to be formed with cow-dung into cakes for burning, not to be thrown on the neighbouring field. The farmers have not, so far as I know, become acquainted even with the use of lime as a stimulant to land. Indeed, as land is generally more abundant than the water which is required to irrigate it, and much must thus remain uncultivated every year, fallows come to supersede in great measure the use of manure, which in our system of farming is so indispensable. The whole of this district, from Tabreez to our present Munzil, Tessouje, is, or might be, one sheet of cultivation: it abounds with fine villages, which are generally situated on the gentle declivity of the mountains, and terminates in the flat land that surrounds the whole lake. I shall close here for the present, and address my next from Ooroomia on its western side, through which *my* road lies.

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LETTER III.

Selmâs. — Russian policy. — Kara-kishlâc. —Sportive damsels.— Kereemabâd.—Plain of Ooroomia.—Agricultural improvements. —Nejeff Koolee Khan.—Palaces and fine apartment.—City of Ooroomia.—Fortified houses. —Armenian church. —Nestorian Christians — their country.—Hakkaree Koords. —Other fierce tribes.—Meer of Rewandooz.—Dr. Ross's journey to that chief. —Contrast between Turkish and Koordish villages.—Dumdum. —Rewandooz.—Character of the people — their dress—manners.—Blindness of the old Meer.—Brothers of the Meer.— —Superstitions. — Inhospitality. — Koordish fierceness and bravery.—Laws and justice of the Meer.—Summary punishments.—Army in the field.—Capture of Accra.—Submission of Amadia.—Dr. Ross joins the Meer in camp.—Meer's appearance and conversation—His camp.—Character.—Speculations as to proceeding.

Ooroomia, 17th October.

THREE days, dear ——, have carried me from the village whence my last was dated, to this ancient and beautiful place, supposed to be the Thebarma of antiquity and the birth-place of the celebrated Zoroaster. From Tessouje our way lay through the district and plain of Selmâs, one of the finest of Azerbijan. But it has suffered greatly; in the first instance from the inroads of the Hakkaree Koords, who inhabit the mountains on the north-west; and, secondly, from the atrocious conduct of Paskevitch, the Russian general, who carried away many thousands of Armenian families from hence,

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Bayazeed, Erzeroom, and other districts in this neighbourhood, leaving the whole town of Selmâs nearly, and many of its villages quite depopulated. A third cause of decay is to be found in the tyrannical conduct of Jehangeer Meerza, who lived much in this quarter during the stay of his father, the late Prince Royal, in Khorasan, and whose name is heavily laden with curses in these parts. Nevertheless, the district of Selmâs is still rich and productive, and in passing through it you see a number of fine villages, particularly towards the upper end near the mountains. But I was surprised to find that the river Selmâs, instead of being, as I had heard, a stream navigable for boat severals miles from the lake, is at this season a miserable rivulet which scarcely wetted our horses' feet while crossing it.

The plain of Selmâs itself, which I should think extended thirty miles inland from the lake, and which may in some parts be ten miles across, has at one time obviously been covered by the lake. Indeed, the gradual recession of the waters of this inland sea is a phenomenon which affords curious matter of speculation. Like all other salt lakes in this part of Asia, and some fresh, it has no outlet, although it is itself a receptacle for the waters of many and considerable streams which flow from the mountains round it. That these were once more abundant sources of supply than at present, appears probable, since, if report on the subject can at all be trusted, the lake, within the memory of man, was much larger and fuller than it now is. Its only drain at present can be from evaporation, unless an

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increased demand of water for irrigation were supposed; but as there is every reason to believe that cultivation has rather diminished than increased, that cannot be the case. However the diminution of waters may be caused, there is no doubt that a gradual increase of land takes place on the margin of the lake, and land of great richness, as is proved both by the crops it yields and by the natural grass it produces, the flocks and herds of the inhabitants being unable to consume the store of herbage in the meadows.

We purposed to have made good our way to Dilmaun, a large village, dignified, I believe, with the name of "town;" but, trusting to my *jelowdar's* guidance, we lost our way and came to a miserable village named Kara-Kishlâc, which I would recommend all future travellers to avoid. My own lodging was in a sort of cock-loft over a mud building, said to do duty as a mosque, but which appeared to have as little just claim to sanctity as it had to comfort; and of the last there was but scrimp share, for it was open to all the winds of heaven. Nor was I better off in regard to food, for though I fain would have had a dinner, the keen air having given me an excellent appetite, my rogue of a cook, unaccustomed to work with cakes of dried cow-dung, the only fuel to be had here, spoiled the fowl destined for me, so that a little dry rice, with an egg or two, was all I had to stop my cravings with. My cattle, however, were better off, for they had both shelter and food in abundance, and they were my chief care.

Next morning, crossing the plain, we ascended

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a valley through certain low hills which separate the plain of Selmâs from another of about twenty miles in length and ten in breadth, also skirting the lake, and backed by the great mountains of Koordistan, many of whose summits were still spotted with snow. This plain was also fertile and well cultivated, and five or six large villages near the hills gave proof that it wanted not its portion of inhabitants. We breakfasted this day in a little valley by a clear stream, disturbing, I am sorry to say, two Koordish ladies who had come there for the purpose of washing clothes, a process which they appeared to be performing in the old Scotch fashion, with legs bare to a pretty considerable height. They were as wild birds as I ever remember to have seen, and appeared much entertained by the spectacle which we, or I should rather say *I*, afforded them. They came from some black tents above, and on our asking whether there was any milk or cream to be had, they replied, "No milk at this time of day, but the finest cream in the world." So off started one of my people on horseback to get this delicious cream; but he only got laughed at for his pains, for it appeared that the damsels had been amusing themselves at our expense, as nothing so redolent of civilized life as cream was to be found in the tents. So I drank my tea without it, leaving my servant to vent his abuse against the Koordish fair (brown) ones for the trick they had played him, and which only made them laugh the more.

Towards sunset of this day, finding our horses waxing dull, after a march of thirty-six miles or

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more, as if they should not care how soon they reached their halting-place, we dismounted at a miserable village, the first that came in our way as we opened the plain of Ooroomia, named Kereemabad, or the abode of Mercy or Kindness. Very little of either did we find there, for not a place could they or would they give us to stow ourselves and cattle in; yet, after some consultation, we thought it better to remain where we were, and where food for the animals might be had, as we were informed, than to go further, and perhaps find not even that. So we piqueted our beasts outside the village, collected the baggage into one heap, set a watch, and, after a very moderate dinner, I got under my *lahoff* upon the dry turf, and slept very tolerably till near the hour of loading in the morning.

Before sunrise we were on our way to the city of Ooroomia; and nowhere, certainly not in the East at least, do I remember passing through a richer country. All around us, in whatever direction we cast our eyes, they fell on sheets of varied cultivation, cotton, rice, millet, castor-oil plant, vineyards, orchards, and great fields, from whence already the heavy crops of wheat and barley had been reaped, prettily divided, and fringed here and there with coppice or rows of trees, willow, poplar, sinjeed (*jujube*), and others. Numbers of large villages, each encircled with its own gardens, lay thickly scattered about, and the state of those we passed through was conclusive as to the wealth and comfort of their inhabitants. Thus, for at least twenty miles, did we ride through a perfectly rich

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and cultivated country to the very walls of the city, which were concealed by trees and gardens.

This day I observed two agricultural improvements which I have seen nowhere else. One was a plough, used to break up the deep soil, of far greater efficacy than the common miserable instrument. It was dragged by eight buffaloes and bullocks, the draught being from an axle with wheels of different sizes at either end; one about twenty inches or two feet in diameter, intended to go in the last-made furrow; the other, not above half as much, to run upon the yet unbroken soil, so that the axle, by this contrivance, was kept upon the level. The other improvement was the adoption of a two-wheeled cart, also drawn by buffaloes —a heavy clumsy machine, it is true, with solid wheels like the old Highland cart-wheels, which went creaking and bumping along on their most irregular circumferences, but still effective enough engines for carrying straw, and such like light bulky articles. It is not a little remarkable that these carts, or *arabas*, as they are called, though used in Turkey, Armenia, and Georgia, and even, I believe, at Khoee, should not have been adopted even at Tabreez, at Tehran, or the more eastern and southern provinces of Persia: the pace of improvement is mighty slow indeed here.

Entering the city, I went straight to the house of the Beglerbeggee, or governor, Nejeff Koolee Khan, an Affshâr nobleman of very high rank, the King having married a sister of his father, so that some of the Princes are his cousins. I had sent forward

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my letters of introduction to this gentleman with a request to be furnished with lodgings; but, whether by mistake or intended attention, I was ushered into his presence at once. I found, both at the gates of the Khan's residence in the courts through which they led me, and in his presence, a great deal of real state and observance, more indeed than at the courts of many of the second-rate Princes, and the respect and ceremony which prevailed had nothing in it forced or got up for the occasion — it was the feudal lord truly surrounded by his vassals. He received me with kindness and affability, but did not either rise at my entrance or exit. In fact, he obviously assumed the style of a Prince, or nearly so, for there were several Khans present who did not sit at all; and the attendance, on the whole, was exceedingly imposing.

The Khan himself had on a shawl-cloak, which you would have allowed would make a beautiful dress—it must have been worth more than one hundred pounds sterling; and at his waist he wore a most splendid dagger, with an agate handle mounted in gold, and having at the top of the hilt a fine emerald. After sitting a considerable time, I was told that my rooms were ready, and followed a servant of the great man's to what had been a superb *dewan khaneh*. It is part of a very extensive palace, built by his father or grandfather, who, I believe, at one time made the *idawa-e-sultunut* — that is, aspired to the crown; and, assuredly, this has been quite a regal establishment. Like all others in this changing country,

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where conflicting interests are continually clashing, and where he who was great to-day becomes less than the least to-morrow, it has gone much to decay; but several of the suites are still in perfect order, and remarkably handsome. The apartment, in which I am now sitting, is thirty feet long by fifteen in breadth, about twenty feet high, and handsomely vaulted. The walls are fitted up with very tasteful recesses, both arched and square, and the whole, walls and roof, have been painted of a rich white, picked out with blue, red, and gold, except for about three feet from the floor, which is salmon colour, ornamented with flowers in deeper tints, all done in oil-colours; and there are some very handsome coloured ornaments on the crests of the arches above. One whole end is occupied by a splendid window of painted glass, terminating in a Gothic arch: I wish I could convey to you the pattern. It is indescribably beautiful, and reminds one of the richest figures shown by the kaleidoscope. In the other end, there are two smaller windows of a similar construction, between which is a fire-place: the floor is of tile; but, when suitably dressed up, is first covered with mats, and over them with rich carpets. The palace contains many smaller rooms of equal beauty, and, in fact, I know few things like it in Persia, except at Ispahan; for, unlike the buildings of the present day, it is constructed of solid brick and mortar. So for once, at least, I am well lodged.

October 19.—I have been much pleased with Ooroomia, which I am now about to quit. The

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Beglerbeggee has been extremely kind to me, and therefore I think him a very fine fellow. There were some reasons for it, to be sure; for, independent of the letters of introduction I brought, I made him rather a handsome present. But some folks do not think it necessary to acknowledge such attentions even with kindness. Nejeff Koolee Khan is a nobleman of high rank, not only by station, but by birth. He is the hereditary chief of the Kossimloo Affshârs, the principal *teereh*, or division, as *he* tells me, of the tribe, which is probably the most numerous and extensively spread in Persia. Nader Shah was, as you know, an Affshâr; but the Khan seems to think very lightly of this, for, he says, that Nader Shah's division were the *servants* of the Kossimloos. At all events, his forefathers for eight generations have held the same office as himself—that of Beglerbeggee, or governor of the city and district of Ooroomia.

His grandfather, Imaum Koolee Khan, was a chief of so much power and influence that, though only twenty-four years of age, in the troubles succeeding the death of Nader, and before the confirmation of Kereem Khan upon the throne, he became competitor with other Khans and chiefs for the crown. But their ambition cost them dear; for most of them were destroyed, and among them Imaum Koolee Khan, who, having met the governor of Khoee in arms, was defeated, and fled back to Ooroomia, where, arriving much overheated, he called for wine, and died in consequence of the fever it produced. Nejeff Koolee Khan insinuates that he

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owed his end to poison, but there seems to be no sufficient proof of this.

His son, Hoossein Koolee Khan, being then a mere child, the late Khan's brother, Mahomed Koolee Khan, either seized upon or was placed in his brother's room, where he continued during the reign of Aga Mahomed Khan; but on the murder of that monarch, when Saduc Khan Sheghaghee and Jaffer Koolee Khan of Khoee arose in opposition to the present King, the said Mahomed Koolee Khan joined them and shared in their defeat. The fate of the unfortunate Saduc Khan is well known; he was starved to death by being built up in a cell, because, forsooth, the King had taken an oath that he would not *shed his blood*; and oaths must be kept! With Mahomed Koolee Khan he used less ceremony; for, proceeding to Ooroomia, he took him prisoner, beat him, tortured him by fire and by preventing him from sleep till he gave up his property and wealth, and then sent him off to Saree in Mazunderan, where he died, or was poisoned.

The King then put the son of the former Beglerbeggee in his father's place, and there he remained a faithful servitor of the Crown until he died. The King married his sister, by whom he had Malek Cossim Meerza, and some other sons. This lady dying, and his majesty being, as appears, very graciously disposed towards the family, he next took a *daughter* of the Khan's, consequently, a *niece* of his former wife, by whom he has also had more than one son; so that the present Khan, who succeeded his father some fourteen years ago, has

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Princes cousin-germans, and Princes at once his cousins and nephews—a pretty medley of kindred. Thus, however, the Beglerbeggee becomes regarded nearly in the light and rank of a *Shah Zadeh*, and maintains the state of one. He is served with much the same ceremony, and has a *nokara khaneh*, or band of music, which plays above his gateway at certain times, &c. In his address, he is affable and polite; moderate in capacity, I should judge; and in face almost the exact image of our friend and neighbour L——, with the addition of a beard and mustachios; and now, I dare say, you have enough of my friend the Khan.

Of the city and its environs, I must say a few words. It has an aspect of more comfort and solidity than any other I remember in Persia. The gardens, which embrace it to the very walls, unite their foliage with that of many trees within them to produce a rich and verdant aspect; for every house of consideration has its gardens, with rows of chenârs and poplars towering above the inclosure. The streets are wider than in most other towns, and have generally a stream of water running in the midst, so that each house may enjoy at will this necessary of life. Few ruins are visible; for, where any exist, they are generally concealed by the wall, which incloses each tenement, like a fort. This mode of rendering each house — that is, those belonging to the great — a sort of stronghold is remarkable, and very characteristic of the state of society which used to subsist in Ooroomia. Situated on the borders of Koordistan, and in the midst of

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a "land debateable," frequented by the fierce tribes and clans of that wild country, most commonly at blood-feud with one another, it became a matter of necessity for each chief to have at least a place of refuge in case of attack from his enemies. When Mookree and Hakkaree, and Affshâr and Zerzaw met here, as on a common neutral ground, how, without such means of defence, could bloodshed and murder be prevented, where the police is weak, or the parties are beyond its power? It was like what we hear of our own Scottish capital in former days:—

> When the streets of High Dun Edin
> Saw falchions gleam and lances redden
> —And heard the Slogan's deadly yell!—

And thus, I dare say, the streets of Ooroomia have often been the scene of bloody frays, and the Koordish spear has many a time and oft clashed against the Affshâr scimitar.

Ooroomia, though an ancient city, and known as such even in the days of the Romans, possesses no show of antiquities. An old tower and mosque of Arab architecture, and built about six or seven hundred years back, can scarcely be regarded as entitled to much consideration. An Armenian church, if we may credit the assertion of its present congregation, has a better claim to attention; for it is said to be one founded by the original Christians of this country. But this claim rests merely on tradition; for, as to the building itself, whatever may have been its original form or size, it now resembles nothing externally so much as a mud hut. The principal part, indeed, is under

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ground, and we entered it through a low door, scarcely large enough to admit a man into the narrow passage beyond: this led us, stooping, into a dark hole, the form of which, even when the eye became reconciled to the obscurity, was hardly to be made out from the quantity of strange hangings that encumbered rather than adorned its walls—offerings of the piety, or superstition, or vanity of its frequenters—suspicious-looking garments, like the shifts of women and the trousers of men, hung from the roof and cornices like the tattered banners of some ancient castle hall or chapel, but quite without their dignity. On one side of what might be the altar, lay a black bonnet, worn by the priest; on the opposite side, a tattered copy of the Armenian Bible. Beyond was a room, into which none but the priest was permitted to enter, and in this the woman, who showed the church, said there was a stone with some writing in Armenian upon it. The priest was not to be found, so I made no attempt to enter the sanctuary, as, without his aid, I could have made nothing out had I succeeded—indeed, even with his aid, I doubt if much could have been done, for these *khaleefahs*, or priests, are very ignorant.

Bordering as Ooroomia does upon Armenia, it reckons among its population a great many Armenians; and as Assyria, which may be said to be coterminous on the other side, is the chief abode of the Nestorian or Syrian Christians, usually called *Nasserânees* (Nazerenes), the whole country affords a most interesting field for exploration, not only of antiquities, but of much that regards the history

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of the Syrian Church; for there is little doubt that, in the rude receptacles of the Nestorian and Syrian monasteries, in these wild mountains, are to be found, could we but come at them, many ancient, and probably valuable manuscripts, in the Syrian and Chaldean tongues, connected with the early times of our religion, and many monuments and inscriptions on stone, which, if deciphered, might lead to very interesting historical, if not theological, discoveries. The misfortune is, that the whole of this country is in the hands of barbarians, so rude and suspicious, that any search after such literary treasures becomes next to impracticable; for, whenever inquiries regarding them are made, the universal opinion of the people is, that the object is not to discover literary or religious wealth, but hidden treasures of gold and silver—the only ones they recognize as valuable: indeed, to impress them with the belief that either manuscripts or inscriptions can be prized for any other purpose than that of using them for such discoveries would be impossible.

Not more than three severe but short days' journey west of Ooroomia, among the lofty and almost inaccessible mountains of Jewâr, there exists a population of these Nestorian Christians, who have lived there for ages, and are said to be the descendants of certain Christians of Mesopotamia, who fled to this difficult region for refuge from the persecutions of Jovian. They amount to better than fourteen thousand families, which constitute a sort of commonwealth of their own, separate from the rest of the world, and who yield neither obedi-

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ence nor tribute to any foreign authority, and, though professing, as some say, a nominal adherence to the head of the Hakkaree Koords who lives at Julamerick, are, in reality, subject to none but their own chief or chiefs. The principal of these chiefs, who are patriarchs or bishops, and are termed by them *khaleefahs*, or caliphs, resides generally in the monastery of Kojannes, and maintains great state. He exercises a perfect authority over his subjects both in spiritual and temporal affairs. Each village has also its *khaleefah*, or priest, who acts also as magistrate, and there were dubious rumours of prelates of intermediate degrees residing at other places, and some of my informants declared that the country was not entirely occupied by Nestorians, but partly inhabited by Koords and *Mussulmans*, meaning Sheahs, or Persians.

These people are represented as living in great comfort, being rich, and their country abounding in all sorts of produce, vegetable and mineral, having mines of lead, antimony, arsenic, and other metals. They are particularly jealous of their freedom, and very able to defend it, for they are very brave and resolute, have twelve thousand capital *toffunchees* (or musketeers), and a particularly defensible country, being a cluster of lofty mountains, intersected by deep ravines and frightful chasms, the beds of rapid torrents. These chasms are spanned by a single tree, which can be removed or let down at either end at pleasure, thus absolutely debarring exit or entrance. I have partially described this country in my "Travels on the Banks of the Caspian Sea,"

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and made it the scene of a tale entitled "Mourâd and Euxabeeth," which you may remember. Judge then how interesting a spot this must be for the researches of an antiquary, and particularly a theological one; and judge how unwillingly I turned my steps from this interesting but dangerous—almost impracticable—country.

Nor are the immediate neighbours of these Nestorians,—namely, the Hakkaree Koords,—less dangerous customers for honest inquirers to deal with. Their country, like that of the Nestorians, is a congregation of rugged ravines, covered with jungle, but interspersed here and there with fertile plains, which yield an abundant return to the labourer and pasture for their numerous flocks. Like them, too, they suspect and dislike all strangers, whom they consider as spies and interlopers. They obey none but their respective chiefs; but are not so exclusive in their practice of robbery and plunder, for they strip indiscriminately every one they catch. Even other tribes of Koords, if not too powerful to be touched, are not always safe. This is the country which, it is said, no power has ever succeeded in reducing to subjection; and, certainly, the ruling powers around do not seem likely to achieve the task; although, I believe, the Ameer-e-Nizâm did penetrate with an army to Julamerick, a strong place in the mountains, where their chief Noor Oollah Khan resides; and the same chief has consented to accept a *khelut*, or dress of honour, from the present heir apparent, and to obey his commands—as *Koords* are wont to obey.

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That they are as treacherous as inhospitable has been fatally demonstrated in their conduct to the unfortunate traveller Schultz, a German *sçavant*, sent into this country by the French Institute, I think, to examine its stores of literary wonders. He had made some very interesting researches in the vicinity of Lake Vân, and the site of the ancient Artemita, and had collected a great deal bearing upon that important desideratum of Oriental inquiry —the decipherment of the arrow-headed characters found on ancient monuments in these countries, as well as at Babylon and Persepolis, &c.* He had even succeeded in making good his way in safety so far through the country of the Nestorian Christians, and had been entertained with apparent hospitality by their *Khaleefah* Mar Shimoon, and had obtained from him several manuscripts and papers, with which he was proceeding towards Tabreez, attended by a guard of the Julamerick Khan's people,—that personage having, as it is also said, received him with the same show of hospitality,—when just near the frontiers, they enticed him into a narrow ravine, on pretext of showing him some old ruin. The way was a mere sheep-path, and he was, unhappily, induced to leave the *cafilah*, or party with which it appears he was travelling, to see this place; but he had got to a very little distance when he

* It must be gratifying to all who are interested in this most curious subject that this desideratum has been in a great degree attained by the industry and intelligence of Major Rawingsen of the Honourable East India Company's Service, who has already deciphered several inscriptions in the arrow-headed character.

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was shot by one of these very guards, who also put to death either one or two of his servants. Another, however, being well mounted, contrived to escape while they were dragging the bodies out of the way; and, getting to Tabreez, told the tale, which is all that is known of poor Schultz's death.

This country is, indeed, overrun with savage tribes, the only check on whom is their relative weakness. The Belbâs, a tribe once numerous and powerful, though now much broken, inhabit the hills and plains of Balig and Lahijan, not very far from hence, and every now and then amuse the neighbouring districts of Sooldooz, Serdusht, and even Souje-Bulâgh with a *chuppow*, as the highlanders used to descend from their hills on the low lands of Moray, "where every gentleman had a right to take his pleasure," according to their creed. And there are the Rawans and the Harkis, and the Nowchais, and fifty others I dare say, who all have the will, and some of them the power, thus to "take their pleasure." Happily, a power has arisen in the West, which, though of the roughest sort, has at least had the good effect of taming some of these fierce marauders, and reducing them to a wholesome and necessary, though tyrannical, subjection, and thus rendering a part of the country permeable and safe on certain conditions.

Mehemet Pashah, now better known as the "Meer of Rewandooz," was not many years ago, like most other Koordish chiefs, lord of a small district, and leader of the warriors of his own tribe, which had no other designation than that of Rewandooz. He

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began his career by setting aside his own father, as incapable of conducting the affairs of the tribe in troublesome times. Some say that the old man, being of a peaceable and devout disposition, turned *Sooffee*, or saint, renounced the world and its vanities, and placed his son in his own room; I wish for the Meer's credit that such may be the true version of the story, but it is at best doubtful. In like manner he disposed of several of his brothers, I fear, not merely in an arbitrary manner, and fixed himself supreme and firmly at length in his native district of Rewandooz. He then set to work strengthening his power, and raising followers, so as to prepare for future struggles. But the commencement of his true rise dates from the war between Persia and Russia, when the Prince Royal who had made some dispositions to crush the Meer, was forced to withdraw his troops in order to concentrate them against more formidable foes. The Meer, taking advantage of this opportunity, not only retook all the territory of which he had been deprived by the Prince, but extended his arms westward and northward with such success that he has now obtained control over a great part of Upper Mesopotamia, besides the districts extending from Erbile (Arbela) to Kerkook, inclusive, on the east of the Tigris.

It is affirmed that he has fifty thousand men under his orders, of whom the better half are regularly paid and kept in constant work, for he is still actively employed in reducing such coterminous districts as are unable to oppose him, and thus rapidly increases his dominions. But the most singular part

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of the story is the great *moral* change which he has effected in the countries he has thus subjected; for instead of being, as they were, occupied by a nation, or rather nations, of robbers, who could not see a traveller pass without attempting to stop and strip him, and who, as they say of themselves, would cut a man's throat for an egg in his hand, there is not now a thief or theft in the country. The whole craft and practice of robbery has been cut short by a summary process: whoever is caught possessing himself of the goods of others is punished on the spot, or put to death without mercy. For a first offence, the punishment, according to circumstances, is the loss of an eye, of a hand, or sometimes of the nose; for the next, some other mutilation more severe is inflicted; but a third offence is always punished with death.

This is no mere *brutum fulmen* of a law, stern, but inoperative, which it is at the option of juries to mitigate or explain away, so as to blunt its overweening harshness; it is a law, the sharpness of which is called for by the circumstances and the state of society which it is intended to restrain—the law of a robber chief, required to control his fierce banditti, and fearlessly and unsparingly enforced; the people know that there is no appeal from its sentence, no mercy in its justice, and therefore they tremble and obey: anything less bloody and unbending would, under existing circumstances, be ineffectual; and so effectual has it proved, that, I am assured, were any man in the countries where the sway of the Meer is fully established, to see a purse of gold on the road,

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he would not touch it, but report the fact to the head of the next village, whose duty it would be to send for it and keep it, until properly claimed, making his report at the same time to the Meer himself.

It is told of him, that being informed that one of his brothers, rather a favourite too, in riding by a poor man's garden put forth his hand and plucked a pomegranate, without asking the owner's permission, he sent for him and charged him with the fact, which was not denied. "And which was the hand you put forth to do the act?" The young man held it forth. "And with which finger did you pluck the fruit?"—"With this," was the reply.—"Then let that finger be immediately cut off," said the Meer, and the sentence was carried into execution on the spot. There is another story current which reminds us of a similar one related of Nader Shah, to whom, in fierce remorselessness of character, he appears to bear no small resemblance. The body of a man, mutilated by wolves and jackals, was found near the highway, not far from certain villages. Intelligence of the fact reached the Meer, who caused all the usual inquiries to be made, but without producing any discovery of the murderers. The villagers, when questioned, laid the fault upon the wolves of the neighbouring jungles, who had already devoured a great part of the carcass. "Then bring those wolves to me," was the order given in reply to this excuse; and the whole village, knowing the consequence of failure, was in a bustle to catch the wolves. Some were taken, and brought to the

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great man, who put them one after another to a lingering death with terrible tortures, the sight of which, it is affirmed, so terrified the villagers, that they exerted themselves to discover and give up to justice the real murderers, in order to save themselves from the terrible fate which that of the poor wolves seemed to point out as likely to become theirs. The tale is not very probable, but shows the light in which the dealings of this chief are regarded.

To aid in describing a chief who seems fated to exercise an important influence over a large portion of this very interesting country, I am tempted to make use of some extracts from a journal kept by Dr. Ross, the medical gentleman in attendance on the British resident at Baghdad, who had the singular good fortune to make a journey through this dangerous country, by invitation of the Meer himself. It appears that Meer Mustapha, the father of the chief, is blind, and that in the hope of restoring him to sight, he had sent to request Colonel Taylor that an English doctor might be sent to try his skill. The opportunity of cultivating relations with this singular man was readily seized on by Colonel Taylor, and Dr. Ross being charged with this interesting duty, departed for the country of the Meer under convoy of his uncle Bayazeed Beg, who had been sent to Baghdad on this mission to the British resident.

It is necessary first, however, to tell you that in addition to all his conquests, both in Mesopotamia and in the lower parts of Assyria, the Meer had at that time turned his arms against the large and fer-

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tile, though mountainous and difficult, country of Amadia, which lies to the north-west of Rewandooz and to the north of Mousul. This state, or rather Pashalic, for its chief was a Pashah, is spoken of by all in the highest terms of commendation, for its productiveness, beauty, and density of population. Several persons of high respectability agreed in declaring to me that it contained twelve thousand villages, not petty hamlets, but consisting of from two to three hundred families (or houses) each. A statement which must be enormously beyond the truth, as, taking each village at only one hundred and fifty houses, and giving but five persons to each house, the aggregate would be nine millions—a population greatly exceeding that of the whole of Persia: it must therefore be taken only to mean that Amadia is very populous.

It was ruled by a Pashah, the descendant of a Koordish family, who received his investure from the Porte; but misrule, and jealousy, and domestic brawls, led to his overthrow. The country became split into numerous petty chiefships, the heads of which paid no regard to the reigning Pashah, a weak and foolish man, who had lost all authority, and who shut himself up in his castle of Amadia, secure in its supposed impregnability, while the Meer was overrunning the country, and one by one reducing all these petty and self-constituted chiefs. At last he laid siege to Amadia itself; and by availing himself of family feuds and treason, bribed his way into that important fortress, from whence he directed his efforts with still greater vigour to re-

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duce the remaining strongholds of the country. At the period of Dr. Ross's journey, however, Amadia had not fallen, and the Meer was besieging Akra or Accra, a very strong fortress upon the Zâb, about fourteen hours from N.N.W. to N. of Erbile.

It was towards the middle of May, 1833, when Dr. Ross left Baghdad; and among the first remarks he made, was the great contrast which was observable in point of cultivation and population, between the Turkish and Koordish territories. In the former, all the villages were deserted, the inhabitants having taken flight to avoid the government imposts. Every creature that remained was open-mouthed in complaint against Allee Pashah of Baghdad, and the moment a man belonging to the government appeared, away they ran to hide themselves. On the other hand, no sooner did the party reach Altoun-Kupree, than all the people flocked out to meet Bayazeed Beg, wearing flowers on their heads as on holidays, and pressed forward to kiss his hand, and shouted and cheered as he passed along.

From Altoun-Kupree to Erbile the plain was covered with flowers interspersed amongst the richest verdure, and the country was very populous. The reception of Bayazeed Beg, at the latter place, is described by Dr. Ross as being in the highest degree picturesque and beautiful, both from the rich costumes and from the affectionate animation that gave spirit to the scene.

On the 19th of May, Dr. Ross left Erbile for

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Rewandooz, near which place resided old Mustapha Beg, the object of the professional part of his journey; and traversing a mountainous but very fertile country, much covered with low oak, and wild almond, and surmounting several steep passes, they reached Dumdum, the residence of the old man, from whence they could see the valley and fortress of Rewandooz, the latter not more than an hour's ride distant. Dumdum is a small fort built upon a precipitous promontory of rock one hundred feet high, insulated by a wall built across the neck, and overlooking a small town of one hundred poor houses, in a perfect jungle of gardens filled with every sort of fruit tree. From this place the town of Rewandooz appeared to consist of about two thousand poor houses with a sort of fort situated in a hollow of the mountains, on the south bank of the greater Zâb, over which there was a bridge of trees, resting on two stone piers, and covered with branches and earth. The river was narrow, rapid, rough, and deep, but eight hours further down, kellecks (or rafts of skins) can go across. The Doctor was not permitted to visit Rewandooz, nor to go much about the country, but among other objects of interest which he heard of, he mentions one in particular; a pillar of marble standing upon a quadrangular base, in all about three spears (thirty to thirty-five feet) high, and covered with inscriptions.* Several Europeans, at different times, had expressed a wish to visit it, but permission was always refused. It was

* It will be found, hereafter, that I also heard of this pillar.

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said to be two days' journey from Dumdum, and has been supposed to be a pillar set up by Semiramis.

Of Dumdum and its inhabitants, Dr. Ross does not speak with much applause. Of the latter, he says, " the people appear to know little of the good things of this world. The great folks are miserably dressed, and their houses mere pig-styes. They are sulky savages; they will not give even a draught of milk without growling, and everything further has almost to be forced from them. When I gave them medicine they grumbled that I did not furnish bottles to put it in." The dress of the richer men is the same as that of the Baghdadees. The poorer wear a short jacket, with wide camlet trousers, and a felt jerkin without sleeves, cotton shoes and woollen stockings; and on their head, the peculiar Koordish turban. The women wear a blue shirt with wide trousers, tied at the ankles, and a square mantle fastened by two corners hanging down the back. On their head they wear a round plate of silver, from which hang down large drops with a coin fastened to each, round the head and neck or the whole affair is made of silver coins. The mode of salutation is curious; each takes the other by the right wrist, and kisses the forearm. Every evening six or eight of the villagers dined " below the salt," at the Meer's house, and several old warriors, the friends of his youth. Ophthalmia the Doctor observed to be frequent here.

His patient, the old Meer (Mustapha,) turned out to be irrecoverably blind. The cause, by his own account, ophthalmia, brought on by putting snow

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upon his head, one day when much heated by ascending a mountain, on the top of which he found a bed of it. Report had asserted that he had been blinded by order of his son, by the *meel* (red hot iron pencil), or the hot iron cup, but this Dr. Ross declares to be assuredly false. The cause of his resignation in favour of that son is less certain. Some assert that his deposition was compulsory; others, that, being convinced his son was calculated to become a greater man than himself, he had voluntarily resigned in his favour.

The Meer, or rather Pashah, Mahomed has four brothers living. Two of them, Timoor Khan and Suleiman Beg, are kept in irons in a fort five hours distant from Rewandooz. Another, Ahmed Beg, was governor of Erbile, and the fourth, Rasool Beg, was with the army. The Meer has three wives but no family, nor, as he is forty-five, is he likely to have any, in which case Rasool Beg is regarded as his successor.

The Doctor appears to have been but shabbily treated at Dumdum, from whence he returned to Erbile to await the orders of the Meer. On his way he saw the people of a village bringing their children to a very old woman who happened to pass, and who *blew* or grunted a prayer over them, and gave them pieces of old rags and coins, which also she blessed, and which were fixed to the caps of the little ones as charms against evil. The Doctor found the Koords, like all mountaineers, very superstitious; "every hill and every ravine has its goblin, and near Rewandooz there is a cavern full

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ceived in recent fights. I understand their battles are very sanguinary. They begin with their rifles, but soon come to use the dagger all in earnest. No Arab blustering—all right hard fighting; and the return of killed and wounded is generally very great. They hold the Baghdad government and its troops in the most thorough contempt, and say, if the city was likely to be of any use to them, the Turks would not stand in their way a day. Erbile and Kupree they found occasion for, and took accordingly; the former *in one hour*. They depend on no country but their own for the supply of all their wants. Everything they require is produced at home, and while their mountains form impregnable defences against foreign invaders, their rugged sides and valleys, with little effort, produce abundantly everything they desire to cultivate, and afford a never-failing supply of wood, water, and pasture."

The country around Erbile is let out by the Pashah to the Sheikhs, in districts, after the manner of the feudal system. The T'hye, or Taee Arabs, are subject to the Pashah, and send a large contingent to his army, which was then at Accra. The Pashah appeared to be well liked, or rather feared; perhaps on account of his strict mode of government. Theft and robbery are scarcely ever heard of, and no door is ever closed at night; yet punishment by death is seldom inflicted: for theft, a hand is chopped off; for desertion, a foot; and for other crimes, the loss of one or both eyes is held sufficient. Occasionally, however, a severe and

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striking example is made. A Sheikh of the Taee tribe of Arabs, all notorious plunderers, having been driven across the Tigris by the more powerful tribe of Jerbah, took refuge in the Meer's country, where for some time he lived in peace and quietness, according to the rules and regulations laid down by that chief. But tired out with inaction, the passage of a small caravan close to his camp afforded a temptation too strong to be resisted; he plundered it and possessed himself of the goods it contained. But ere the evening of the second day—ere almost he had time to reckon up his ill-gotten gain, half a dozen of Koords made their appearance, and riding up to his tent, without either ceremony or explanation, struck off his head at the door, after which they as quietly departed.

While at Erbile, where he was civilly received by Ahmed Beg, the Meer's brother, and governor of the place, and was visited by Sultaun Beg, a chief from the camp. The Doctor learned that the army consisted of from fifteen to twenty thousand men, who were idle in camp, Accra having been taken some time before. This stronghold, it appears, is situated on the top of an almost perpendicular rock, approachable only by one path, so narrow that two men can scarcely mount abreast. The natives believed that no power on earth could take it, nor did the Pashah himself expect it to fall so soon; but it so happened that having been attacked in person during a reconnoitering party, by an ambush, and almost taken prisoner, his people were so furious that he led them next morning against the place, which was

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actually carried in three hours, with the loss of only one hundred and fifty men on his side. The Koords of Amadia were so appalled by this *coup-de-main*, that it was supposed they would give up the place without any more fighting.

On the 30th of May, a letter was received from the Pashah, conveying to the governor his commands that Dr. Ross should remain at Erbile till sent for, but should be attended to with the utmost respect; an injunction which had a powerful effect in improving the comforts of his situation. On the 6th of June information was received that the affairs of Amadia were settled, the former Pashah, Seyed, having decamped, and Moossa Pashah being now placed in his stead; Selim Pashah was placed in Accra, and all the country, having submitted to the Rewandooz government, was in perfect quiet. Yet it was not till the 3rd of July, after many remonstrances, and frequent detentions, upon false assurances of the Pashah's speedy arrival at Erbile, that an order arrived from his Highness to forward the Doctor to the camp. That personage, it appears, keeps his movements in the profoundest mystery; no one is ever able to guess when or whither a march may take place, nor, until mounted, even the direction the troops are to take.

Dr. Ross crossed the Zâb on a *kelleck*, or raft of inflated skins covered with brushwood, which he describes as resembling the representation of Neptune's car, and it was towed across by two horses, which, being first driven into the water, were urged across by the people on the raft, who

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held fast by their tails. The party reached Accra by a route of fourteen hours, or fifty-six miles N.N.W. to N.; and Dr. Ross considers both Erbile and Accra as pretty nearly due-north of Baghdad.

The Pashah received him well, but sent privately to beg his excuse for not *rising up* to receive him—a compliment due, he was aware, to the King of England's servant, but which, being surrounded by newly conquered people, he was desirous to avoid paying, as implying an acknowledgment of equality which it might not be politic for him publicly to admit. He found the Pashah, a benevolent pleasing-looking man of about forty-five years of age; fair, marked with the small-pox, and blind of an eye, which was depressed and opake. His beard was about twelve inches long, of a light brown colour, the lower half being uncombed and quite felted together: in other respects, he was rather tidy in dress. He was lame of one leg from the kick of a horse, and spoke with a weak voice. He entered into long conversations, more than once, with Dr. Ross, and chiefly on general subjects; inquired regarding the mode of education in England; the religion of India and China—the latter country he thought was ours, as well as the former. He also desired to know what terms we were on with Persia, and with Russia. On another occasion, he made many inquiries as to the uses and effects of medicine; the state of the pulse in illness; of the plague, cholera, &c.; then he would pass to more warlike subjects, and speak of guns and

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pistols, producing an old English double-barrelled gun and a rifle, which, with a sword, a telescope, and an umbrella, a wooden bed, and a few carpets, composed the greater part of his tent furniture. Close to his own tent, there was a large double-poled one, in which he holds *durbar* in the forenoon, and at night. He never went to bed till after dawn, and slept till nine or ten in the forenoon. A quarter of an hour before the last prayer, a noisy band struck up; and at prayer-time, a gun was fired.

The force, in camp, Dr. Ross understood to be only about ten thousand men, not half the original army, the rest having been sent home for the harvest. The camp itself had no pretensions to military order; the only thing regular was a ring of small tents round that of the Pashah, containing his own guard, in number three thousand. These also act as his servants. The infantry have rifles and daggers; the cavalry, lances and daggers. Every chief of an *ashayer*, or clan, had his own tribe encamped about him, separate from the rest, which spoiled the look of the camp, so that it was spread out to an extent which, according to the rules of European castrametation, would contain fifty thousand men; yet, notwithstanding all this want of discipline, or order, not a sound was heard, and every man could be in one spot in five minutes. The men were of their own accord constantly firing at marks; and every evening from one to two hundred of the soldiers dined in the Pashah's tent, coming by turns from the different tribes. A

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number of prisoners were remarked in the camp heavily ironed on the neck and legs. The Doctor mentions, that it is the Pashah's custom to purchase from the captors every sort of property taken in war, and in general at a price twice as large as any other buyer would give.

On the 8th of July, Dr. Ross left the Pashah's camp and took the road to Mosul. On the other side of the Zâb he found one hundred Arabs of the Boo-Selmân tribe, ready mounted to escort him through the remainder of the Rewandooz chieftain's territory. He remonstrated against the attendance of such a host; but the leader of the band informed him that his orders were precise, and that he could not abate him one man; and the Doctor takes occasion here to point out the contrast between the customs of officials in the Pashah's and in the Turkish territory. The moment he entered the latter, he was stunned by demands for *buksheesh* (presents), and, after fleecing him of what he might have about him, the sturdy beggars followed to his home for more. In the territories of Rewandooz the word was never mentioned. In all parts comparisons were drawn between the government of Allee Pashah of Baghdad and of the Meer, to the greatest possible disadvantage of the former, against whom treason was openly spoken, while the Meer of Rewandooz was as openly extolled.

So far the notes of Dr. Ross. The account given by most of the persons whom I met with, best qualified to afford information on the subject, coincided in most particulars with that given in

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these notes. The character of the Meer is shown forth in his acts. He is inordinately ambitious, and quite unscrupulous in regard to the means of attaining his ends; prudent and far-sighted, but jealous and suspicious in the extreme; strongly imbued with notions of a stern justice, but practising its dictates rather as a means of further aggrandizement than for its own sake. He is careless of spilling blood, but not prone to kill in wantonness, or without a cause; yet never sparing when a cause, however slight, exists. I was informed that a certain tribe of Koords, having opposed him with vigour during the siege of Amadia, and persisted in holding out against him even after the fall of that place, he turned the force of his arms against them; and, having with considerable trouble subdued them, he put to death all that fell into his hands, to the amount of several thousands, as a warning to others.

The jealousy of the Meer extends only to strangers travelling in the country without apparent business; merchants, muleteers, or the inhabitants of circumjacent countries, require no passport, and are free to come and go; but persons coming from a distance, particularly if from states which have evinced hostility at any time, would run the risk of being stopped and imprisoned as spies. I inquired what might likely be my own case, were I to enter his country without previously securing permission so to do; the reply from all was to the same purpose, that it would be the height of imprudence to attempt such a step; that he was a man of *budfikr*, evil thoughts,

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who might take it in his head I was a spy, and treat me ill, particularly as coming from Tabreez. On being pressed to explain what they meant by bad treatment, they said I should probably be confined in some strong place till the Meer's pleasure could be known, and then sent out of the country in such a manner as to see as little of it as possible; that for the sake of his own good name, I might probably meet with no violence in his territories, but that I might very probably *fall amongst thieves* on crossing the frontier, in my way out of them; a very easy expedient in so disturbed a country.*

All this was matter of serious consideration to me. The character of this remarkable chief, and the rapid progress in power he had made within the last five or six years, together with the important moral change it was likely to effect in this part of Asia, rendered it no less a point of duty than of curiosity, to see and become acquainted with him, and judge how far report had done him justice. With this

* The fate of this remarkable man was not just what might have been anticipated. In process of time his progress and exploits on the Turkish territories occasioned a powerful and combined movement against him on the part of the Porte. Resheed Pashah, who commanded the army in Diarbekir, and on the side of Koordistan, moved against him on one side, while Allee Pashah of Baghdad, and Mahomed Pashah of Mousul, attacked his territories on the south and west. The Meer defended himself valiantly; and, had his own troops been true, would have laughed the combined forces to scorn. But the Meer was not popular in the conquered countries. His severity had made him more feared than loved. Some of his officers were treacherous; and it is certain, that those who would have stood by him to the last on common occasions, were dismayed by seeing the sanjack

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view, I had received from the envoy a letter, together with certain presents, which it was my object to convey to him in person, as the commencement of a friendly intercourse, which hereafter might prove useful and convenient. My plan was, on my arrival at Ooshnoo, a place two days' journey hence, to which I mean to go, and which is but sixty miles from Rewandooz, to send a letter mentioning the nature of my credentials, and proposing that, if his Highness saw fit to receive them from my own hands, he should send me a guide and safe conduct under his own hand; but if otherwise, and that he should object to receive me, he might depute some one to receive the presents. You may judge of my disappointment at learning here that the Meer, instead of being at Rewandooz, as I hoped, was full ten days' journey off, in Mesopotamia, where he was prosecuting his conquests. Thus, were I to send to him, at least twenty days must elapse before the answer could arrive, and twenty more would be required for me to visit him and to

(colours) of the Sultan arrayed against them. Lingering remains of veneration for the successor of the Prophet and the head of their religion, forbade the Koords to oppose in arms the troops of the Sultan. The Meer felt this; and, after losing one after another his best strongholds, about the end of August 1836, he actually surrendered himself into the hands of Allee Pashah of Baghdad. He was sent in irons to Constantinople, where he was kept in a sort of half-honourable confinement for some time, but after a few months was pardoned, and appointed to the government of his own country, on promise of good behaviour. But he never reached it—why, or how, I know not: he was put to death upon the road, no doubt, by orders of his sublime master and conqueror.

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return; a delay which, as my time has already run short, it is impossible to incur. On the other hand, however desirous I might be to undertake so very interesting an enterprise, there were sufficient reasons existing to deter me from putting life or liberty in jeopardy, so palpably as must be done by entering the country of the Meer without his own permission. So once more, with extreme reluctance, I sacrificed inclination to duty; and, contenting myself with the best information I could pick up in the coterminous countries about this remarkable chief, to take my way to Baghdad by Soolimaniah. Even this will carry me through a route comparatively little known, and show me a good stretch of Koordistan, though nothing in comparison of the other route. But you know not the full extent of my self-denial. Had I gone by Rewandooz, and possibly by Amadia, I should have come down upon Mosul, and visited the site of ancient Nineveh and the tomb of the Prophet Jonas. But this, too, I must give up, and I hope, dear ——, you will give me credit for some consideration and self-control when you hear this; for how easily might I have found an excuse for another month's delay? but no, —honour bright—a sense of duty, and the "lingering chain" of Goldsmith, keep me right in spite of all temptations, and will not suffer me to protract my absence one day beyond what necessity requires.

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LETTER IV.

Leave Ooroomia.—Koordish Costume and Weapons.—Dusht-e-Beel.—Ugly Customers.—Koordish Mountains.—Plain of Ooshnoo.—Sumud Khan and his Establishment.—Antiquity of the Koords—compared with the Highland Clans.—State of the Country.—A Disappointment.—Ooshnoo—Depopulation of.—Buffaloes—their Usefulness.—Koords on Horseback.—Fishing.—Singular Mode of catching Quails.—Leave Ooshnoo.—Blood Feuds.—Suggerân Seyeds.—Negotiations for safe Conduct.—Success in Fishing.—Koords at Prayer.—Kara Papâks and Bilbâs Koords.—Threatening Appearances.—Bustards.—Churlish Repulse.—Retreat to a Caravanserai.—A hospitable Koord.—A Disappointment.—Piscatory Adventures.

Ooshnoo, 21st October, 1834.

If you seek, dear ——, to find the place of my present abode in any map you are likely to have within reach, you will seek it in vain. But if this find you in London, and you should have the means of getting sight of Monteith's map of Azerbijân, &c. you may see it laid down about thirty-five miles S.S.W. of Ooroomia, and to the west of Lake Shahee, that is in the very heart of Koordistan.

On the 19th I took leave of Ooroomia and its very interesting neighbourhood, as well as of its kind and polite chief; but that day we only marched twelve miles, taking up our abode at a small village of the Khan's, where we were still entertained as

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his guests. We were lodged in a large building of mud, used as a mosque, and were well entertained by the chief people of the village, so far as eatables were concerned; but I never passed a more sleepless night. Some how or other I awoke after a couple of hours' nap, and got into a train of thought that kept me wakeful. Then came a concert of dogs, baying the moon, which lasted two full hours. Then the labourers of the village, who attend to the irrigation of the rice grounds, assembled behind the mosque just at my head, and struck up a clattering and laughing that might have wakened the seven sleepers. By the time they went off, it was about time to think of going too; but I did fall into that sort of doze in which our dreams are the most vivid, and I had a dream—a dream of home. I had returned —I saw you all, and fain would have mingled with you; but there was an obstacle—I could not tell what—and there were . . . . remonstrating with me, and I was still striving to approach with a force and vividness of feeling, that was little short of reality, when in came the people to tell me they were loading, and all vanished, leaving me in the cold dim mosque, to rise for a cold ride, for the wind blew fiercely from some hills on the right, which still were flecked with large patches of snow.

Our path, this day, led up a narrow but cultivated country, plunging into the very heart of the Koordish mountains, amongst which we soon found ourselves, and every moment were met and passed by parties of wild-looking Koords, with their fine flowing garments and long slender spears. The

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dress of these people is by far the most picturesque I have seen, with the exception of some few among the Turkish costumes: indeed, the word "picturesque," applies better to it than to any Turkish dress I know. On their head they wear a large shawl of striped silk, red, white, and blue, with fringed ends, which is wound in the most graceful manner round their red skull-cap. Its ample folds are confined with some sort of band, and the long fringes hang down with a rich fantastic wildness; their true Saracenic features, and bright black eyes, gleam with peculiar lustre from under this head-tire. Their body garments consist of a sort of ample vest and gown, with magnificent wide Turkish sleeves, over which is worn a jacket, often richly embroidered and furred, according to the owner's rank. Their lower man is enveloped in ample *shulwars*, not unlike those of the Mamlucs, into which, in riding, they stuff the skirts of their more flowing garments. Around their waist, instead of a shawl, they wear a girdle fastened with monstrous silver clasps, which may be ornamented according to the owner's taste with jewels, and in which they stick, not only their Koordish dagger, but a pair of great brass or silver-knobbed pistols. From this, too, hang sundry powder-horns and shot-cases, cartridge-boxes, &c. and over all they cast a sort of cloak, or *abba*, of camel's hair, white, or black, or striped, white, brown, and black, clasped on the breast, and floating picturesquely behind. When riding they carry a small round shield depending from the left shoulder, and grasp in their hand a long slender spear. If in

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war-time, and they are going on an expedition, in addition to these arms they carry a gun, and occasionally three slender javelins in a case, which they can throw with great precision to the distance of thirty yards. Then they case themselves in armour, like knights of old, either in a shirt of linked mail, such as those in the hall at ——, with helmet and armlets, or with a suit of plate-armour, called *Char-Eineh*, consisting of four plates of inlaid and Damasked steel, made to fit back, breast, and sides, and which are a defence against anything but a ball striking them directly. From this sketch of Koordish costume, you will comprehend that it is worth seeing, and that the groups that passed us, ever and anon, were in good harmony with the scenery, and well calculated to awaken interest and fix attention; but as for the costume, I hope you will be enabled to judge for yourself, as I mean to procure a complete dress, which may serve some day for a fancy ball at home.

After breakfasting beside the stream, which we were following up to its head, we continued on till we reached a wide level, or table-land called the *Dusht-e-Beel*, where the waters separated and ran to either side the ridge; and, leaving the regular road, we struck over this high flat, which was inhabited, we understood, by Eeliaut Koords of a very fierce and lawless character. The path we followed, it seems, was both shorter and better than the regular one we had quitted, but is seldom preferred on account of these same Eeliauts, who make no ceremony about stripping and plundering all whom they are

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able to overpower. While we were listening to this account from our guide, who bade us fear nothing under his protection, I observed six stout fellows in the Koordish dress, but on foot, appear on the brow of a little height, and reconnoitre us with a very suspicious air. Our guide immediately rode forwards to them; and, after a few words had passed, they all came forwards and made their graceful salute, while their leader, an old man, laid his hands upon his eyes, as much as to say, "you have brought light to these, and are as dear to me as them," and proffered all manner of services and welcomes. The old villain! but for the presence of our guide and our own obvious strength, he would have scrupled as little at possessing himself of our effects and knocking us on the head, as if we had been so many jackals; but a single guide, not to speak of our fire-arms, made them all our humble slaves. On we fared; and, descending a very rugged and steep ravine, in which ran a fine clear stream, we saw beneath us the fine valley or basin of Ooshnoo, stretching from fourteen to fifteen miles or more each way, in length and breadth, studded with villages and backed by the magnificent chain of Mount Zagros, the backbone of Koordistan, and indeed of this part of Asia, which stretches from the knot of mountains in Armenia where the Tigris and Euphrates take their rise, to the Bukhtiaree mountains that run past Ispahan, and passing through Fars, unite with those of Kermân and Mekrân. It was a fine lofty ridge, spotted plentifully with snow, and, I should conjecture very roughly, not less than

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from eight to ten thousand feet high above the level of the sea; but the loftiest knot of the chain, that of Jewâr, the habitation of the Nestorians, lay hid from us to the west. It was a noble sight—a fertile theme for thought and speculation—but the hours of daylight were passing away, and we were forced to haste towards the town, or rather large village of Ooshnoo, which we reached just as the sun sank behind the lofty peaks of granite, and where we were received by Sumud Khan, chief of the place and tribe of Zerzaw, with all possible kindness and hospitality.

Ooshnoo, the first truly Koordish abode I have been domiciliated in, differed not externally from other Persian villages; but the costume of its inhabitants imparted to its interior a character which no Persian village could present. The Khan himself was habited in the common Persian garb, which, I observe, is adopted by all men of rank, whatever their tribe or country, who have seen something of the world, in the same manner as our Highland Lairds, now-a-days, leave the kilt and the tartan to their followers or clan, and seldom affect the singularity of wearing it, unless upon some particular occasion. The whole of his household and all the other inhabitants, however, retained the Koordish costume, with all their native wildness, and stood gazing at the stranger as if he were a man of other mould than they—*other* I say, not *better*; for no Celtish Laird or loon can think more highly of himself, his family, or his clan, than did these Koords of their blood and tribe; and certainly, so far as

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antiquity has claims to regard, they have good title to consideration; for they are probably the descendants of those who flourished in the days of Cyrus and Xenophon, of Julian and Heraclius, and just as proud, independent, and thievish as they. In fact, the similarity between these Koords, as they *are*, and the highland clans as they *were*, not many centuries ago, is wonderfully strong. They are as devotedly attached to their mountains as any Scotch or Swiss highlanders for their lives can be. Like the first, they are divided into clans and septs, acknowledging the supremacy of chiefs, who are regarded with as much devotion and followed with the same blind zeal, and all on the same grounds, protection and kindness in return for fealty and service. They are proud, haughty, and overbearing, exactly in proportion to their ignorance, and, like our highlanders of old, despise more or less all arts but those of war and plunder—all professions but that of arms. They have their feuds with their neighbours, and make *raids* on the poor industrious lowlander; and woe betides him who should attempt to "ascend the pass of Ballybrugh," or enter the "country" of any Koordish "Donald Bean Lean," without guide and safe conduct. The same love of enterprise and plunder has been inherent in both, each nation has been stained by like atrocities and fearful instances of revenge, and has been famed for the profession, and generally for the practice of hospitality,—the same professed regard for word once pledged—for the sanctity of the promise of protection. But the parallel stops here, for certainly

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the character of "highland hospitality" is deservedly far higher than the *practice* of it, at this day, among the Koords; and I cannot assuredly recollect in highland story any such infamous instances of treachery, of violation of the sacred character of host towards his guest, on the most frivolous pretexts, such breaches of the *spirit* of a promise while the *letter* was kept, as have occurred in Koordistan.

With regard to myself, however, on this occasion I had no cause to complain. A short time saw me fairly lodged in a comfortable chamber, not so superb as my quarters at Ooroomia, but clean and warm, in which I was soon in conference with Sumud Khan, regarding the state of the country generally, but especially as relating to the affairs of Rewandooz. The result of this conversation was conclusive on the subject of my projected visit to the chief of that place. To proceed in it would be folly; I found that the condition of the country was such as even to compel me to relinquish a lesser project, of the success of which I had hitherto entertained no doubts. I had been informed that at the top of a pass on the road to Rewandooz, some sixteen or twenty miles from Ooshnoo, there was to be seen a stone pillar inscribed with writing in some language unknown to any of the people of the country; and the desire of seeing what might have proved a very interesting monument, would have induced me to brave any reasonable risk to be incurred in getting at it. But the Khan assured me that it would be the height of madness to attempt it; that but a few days before, a caravan

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proceeding to Rewandooz, had been plundered by the Bilbâs, and that nothing short of a very powerful party could venture on that road, and such a party he could not supply me with. By way of alleviating my disappointment, I suppose, he informed me that a gentleman, whom I take to be the unfortunate Schultz, had some time ago actually gone to see the stone, and on his return had declared the inscriptions to be illegible from age and defacement, but that they related only to matters of boundary between the two countries, and *had nothing to do with concealed treasure.* Whether or not this inconsistent tale were entirely a fabrication of the Khan's to prevent me from further pressing the point, I cannot determine; but it was easy to see how his own ideas pointed, and therefore, as it would have been dangerous, if not impossible to achieve the adventure without his good will, I gave it up with a good grace, hoping that some other traveller more fortunate, and with more time at his command than myself, may soon decide what this monument of antiquity really is.

Next morning I took a stroll about the town, or rather on the heights above it, and a pretty place it looked, surrounded with a large extent of orchards just tinged with red and yellow by the autumnal tints. Ooshnoo some years ago contained, they say, five thousand families; but "the plague" and "the Kajars," these two desolaters of Irân, have sadly reduced its numbers. Four thousand individuals were swept off by the former, and the latter have occasioned an almost general emigration from the

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valley. I must observe, however, that the Koords are a race who willingly would pay tax or duty to neither King nor Kajars, and who esteem the exaction of either the height of tyranny; so that if the tyranny of the Kajars rested solely on their report, it would assuredly require confirmation. Unfortunately this is not the case, and the short-sighted folly of a race, who seem incapable of suiting their measures of government to the exigencies of the occasion, and the feelings and peculiarities of the people to be governed, is the more to be lamented, as it compromises the happiness and prosperity of the nation. Were the present reigning family, for instance, to take the trouble of conciliating these tribes — from whom it is difficult to wrest anything by force — and to offer the slenderest encouragement in the way of pay, they might command, by a comparatively trifling concession, and small outlay, an almost unlimited number of hardy horsemen and *toffunchees*, who, in an emergency, would be sure to turn the scale in their favour against any opponent.

With its population, the productiveness of Ooshnoo has of course greatly decreased. The town has still about three thousand families, they say, — I should not believe near so many, — and the valley about twelve thousand; but the cultivation is greatly reduced. What I took for stubble-fields proved, on approach, to be meadows of dry grass; and a few green spots here and there marked the small proportion of wheat, which was to form the following harvest. I remarked that buffaloes are a good deal

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employed on this side of Lake Shahee; and here they appear to supersede the use of all other animals for purposes of agriculture. They plough, they drag carts, they carry loads, they give milk, they are killed and eaten; and, I must say, that where water is not scarce, they appear to me the most useful domestic animal possible. They are far stronger than bullocks, and not less docile, and they carry full as great a load as a good camel, while their keep is not more expensive than, and their milk is nearly if not quite as good as, that of the cow. It is true that they cannot do without water, and that, like the water-spaniel, whenever they come to a pool they are apt to lie down in it, to the great detriment of loads and discomfort of drivers or riders. The other day I saw a pair of them coming along, ridden each by a Koord; a pool of black mud lay in their path, and down they both lay, as if by mutual consent, nearly smothering their two gay riders before they could disengage themselves. But on the previous day I witnessed a wonderful proof of the strength and sagacity of the creatures. Four of them were dragging a heavy-loaded cart through a perfect slough; the foremost pair had reached the firm earth of its margin, but, instinctively aware that if they clambered up to the elevated bank they would lose their power of draught, they actually knelt upon it, and continued dragging on their knees until the latter pair, or wheelers, had also got to terra firma. They then rose; and, both uniting their forces, tugged the cart out of the mire. The price

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of these useful creatures runs here from thirty shillings to two pounds each.

Both yesterday and to-day I rode out in the forenoon with the Khan's son, a fine youth, professedly to fish the river, which winds through the Ooshnoo valley; but, in reality, to have an opportunity of observing something more of my Koordish friends, and inquiring into their manners and customs. It was an animating sight to see the young fellows, who accompanied us, careering along the plain at speed, as free, it seemed, as the beasts they chased, winding and turning their well-trained horses as they went through their spear-exercise to amuse me. Truly yon mounted Koord, as he flies along as steady as a rock upon the spirited little animal he bestrides, is a gallant object; his splendid turban gleaming in the sun, his wide mantle floating away behind him, and the long slender spear quivering like a reed as he shakes his bare arm, the loose sleeves of his tunic and jacket waving like streamers in the wind. I assure you that as a dozen of these wildly picturesque figures were careering around us, I felt myself and my three or four Kuzzilbashes, in our sober garbs, cut but a sorry figure. On they would come up to your very breast, their keen steel spear-points glittering like sparks of lightning, when a swerve of their arm, or their body, imperceptible to you, would send them just clear of you, to wheel round with the speed of thought upon the other flank. It was a delightful representation of the admirably described combat between the Scottish knight and

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the Saracen warrior at the "Diamond of the Desert," which opens that delightful tale "The Talisman," and strange enough it seemed, to find one's self amidst the very people there described.

We had little sport in fishing, but a great deal of fun and laughing; for the Koords were too impatient to endure the slow and quiescent process of luring the fish with the bait. The Khan's son, so soon as he saw a shoal of them darting about in the still water, spurred his horse at them, spear in hand, as he would have done at a Bilbâs or a Kuzzilbash, if his foe, shouting out "Ah-ah! ah-ah! look at them! look at them!" and chasing them hither and thither as if he could have caught them by speed of foot. Then all the party dashed into the water girth-deep, splashing, and poking, and shouting out to me to look at the fish—to come here or there—here was the place to catch them—here were the large ones. It was in vain to attempt explaining that all my art lay in quietly enticing the fish to feed—that success depended entirely on perfect stillness, and keeping out of sight of the water. There they would all stand or ride along the banks, or sit upon them, striking with their spears at the fish as they darted by, till a hand-net that had been sent for was brought, when I gladly put up my rod and tackle and looked on, laughing at the childish delight with which the *Khanzadeh* (Khan's son) saw each fish that was entangled in the net taken out of the water. Nor was his delight less on the second day, when, the net having failed of success, I found a pool in which they could not ride, and

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succeeded in hooking and landing several tolerable fish.

At length the rod broke, and there was an end of the fishing, but not of the sport; for we next rode across the country after quails and ducks—anything that afforded an object, or excuse, for a chase, now and then putting up a grand bustard by way of variety; and I was made acquainted with a curious enough way they have of catching quails, and which I do not remember to have seen described. A man, choosing a place where they abound, spreads a net upon the grass or stubble, in such a manner that the birds can run *into* but not *through* it; and then, taking his cloak, he spreads it above his head by means of two sticks, in such a fashion as to double in appearance his natural size and stature. Thus disguised, he goes poking along until he sees a quail upon the ground, when, bending forward, he drives it before him, and the spectre-like hood he carries, overshadowing the creature, so terrifies it, that it does not dare to take wing, but keeps running forward; a movement of the hood to one side or other serves to direct the course of the unfortunate bird, which soon runs right under the net, and is caught. In this odd manner a great many quails are taken, and one may see dozens of men with their cloaks stuck over their heads, in the manner I have described, employed on a fine evening in the fields at this pastime.

October 22.—This morning I despatched a messenger to the Meer of Rewandooz with the Envoy's letter and presents, and a letter from my-

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self, explaining the reason of my not proposing to present them in person, and expressing my great regret at the want of time which deprived me of the opportunity of paying my respects to a chief of his celebrity. This piece of duty being performed, and having breakfasted, I took leave of our good host, and quitted the place with feelings of great kindness to all of its inhabitants with whom I had come in contact, and pleased with the country, as well as with our entertainment. I have some reason to hope and believe these feelings were reciprocal—perhaps they were a little aided on the part of my friends by some trifling remembrancers, in the shape of presents, which it seemed good to me to bestow.

Our first stage was a short one. The good folks of these countries, who themselves set no value upon time, and consider ease and enjoyment as the only true ends of life, if you leave them to fix the stages of your journey, will, assuredly, not distress you by their length; and the first is always particularly short. But there was another reason, as it appeared, for the Khan's fixing my first day's munzil, on this occasion, at a village only nine or ten miles from Ooshnoo: it was the last in his country, and separated from the neighbouring district of Sooldooz only by a little rising ground. A portion of the Bilbâs tribe occupied that part of the Sooldooz district, and with them his clan had a blood-feud. When, therefore, the guide he gave me reached the village in question—Humza Hussan, I think, was its name,—he signified to me that either I

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