

years, of which the present is the fifth year. About six or eight months ago, the Russian governor sent agents into the northern part of my territories, to purchase camels, upon some feigned pretext. Guessing for what they were designed, I forbade the sale, upon pain of death to the seller. Nevertheless, some of my Kuzzauks, on the northern frontier, supplied a considerable number to Russia."

"And what is the strength of the invading force?"

"From four to five thousand fighting men, and some guns."

"But other troops must be following this small force?"

"At Orenburgh are 12,000 more."

"Is there any Russian fort or town south of Orenburgh?"

"Yes! I have heard that the Russians constructed a fort or entrenchment (Sungur) called Auk Gullah, half way between Orenburgh and \* the lake of Khaurism (sea of Aral). They have also an entrenched camp upon the Yem (Embah), and an advanced post, between that and the lake of Khaurism, upon one of the springs of the Yem."

"And what are they doing?"

"They are arrested by the snow, which lies there to the depth of five feet. They await a thaw, to advance."

"What are your Majesty's news from the seat of war?"

"My horsemen had a skirmish with the Russians, whom they would have swept from the face of the earth, but for the severity of the cold, which froze them in their saddles. The Russians, sitting over fires, aimed with deadly certainty, and killed many

\* Dungiz i Khaurism.

of my horsemen. As the latter retreated, the enemy's guns opened upon them. See," he added, producing from the corner or rather side of the tent, by a nod to the Mehtur, a six-pound ball, highly polished, as if it had been used for the game of bowls; "that is one of the deadly missiles, with which my subjects were assailed in their retreat."

I could scarcely restrain a smile, as I looked at my old playfellow, the six-pound shot, and then glanced at the lengthened physiognomy of "the Father\* of the conqueror of Heroes, the Father of Victory, the King of Khaurism." I perceived pretty plainly, that so long as the six-pound shot remained in the royal pavilion, it would keep ajar the door of reconciliation.

I returned to my house in a state of mind not easily described. I examined and re-examined my position, but reason assured me there was nothing to amend. The most extensive benefit to my country might be the result; evil, should it ensue, would be confined to my own head. I only hoped the Khaun would use despatch in my mission, as every hour increased the peril of Khiva, and placed the means of averting it, farther out of reach. My position was novel and romantic. I was already the representative of two states, Great Britain and Heraut, at the Court of Khiva. I was now to become in fact, though not in name, the ambassador of a Khaun of Tartary to the Court of the Muscovite. There were sufficient difficulties and dangers in my path; but it was the path of duty.

\* One of the letters with which I was entrusted by the Khaun Huzurut commences thus—"The words of the Father of the Conqueror of Heroes, the Father of Victory, the King of Khaurism."

I could not sleep that night, but went often into the snow-covered court, to gaze upon the stars, and think of the possibility, how faint, yet how precious, that amid my many adventures, some happier wave of destiny might cast me upon my native shore. The nine hundred miles of snowy desert disappeared before my excited fancy. The difficulties at posts and outposts were all as nothing. I had, in the determination to succeed, a talisman, which nothing could impair or confound.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Discussion of Routes—An Oozbeg Chart of the World—Relative Extent of the British and Russian Dominions—English Habits—The Khook and its Varieties—My unhappy Ignorance—Apology to the Tuscans—Necessity of foregoing all Geographical Research, imposed by the extreme Importance of my Mission, and the extreme Suspicion with which I was regarded—Another Audience—Meyendorf's Travels—The Air-gun—Discussion of Routes—Impracticability of that by the Balkaun—Difficulties of the Orenburgh Route—Recommendation by the Khaun Huzurut of that by Mungl Kishlaur and Astrakhan—Questions relative to Europe, Dress, Dwellings, Climate—Telescopes, Astrology, Female Sovereigns—Number of Cities, Russia, China.

THE next day I had an interview with the Mehtur at his palace, in which we discussed my purposed journey to Russia. I thought that the route by the Balkans, and thence to Astrakhan, seemed the most feasible. But the Mehtur, who was utterly ignorant of the subject, promised to consult the Khaun Huzurut. I declined any large escort. And in respect of an Oozbeg ambassador accompanying me, I could not recommend it, seeing that three such ambassadors had already been arrested. This matter, however, I left to the decision of the Khaun Huzurut.

A map of the world, the production of a profound Oozbeg philosopher, was then produced; I begged a clue to this singular chart, and was rather surprised to find that Italy lay north of England; and Russia south of China. My poor English map of the world

would, I foresaw, fall into great discredit, in presence of so well authenticated a chart. As to pleading the cause of Italy or China, I was not fond enough to attempt anything so hopeless. But after turning up the whites of my eyes, in compliment to the profound science of the Oozbeks, returned the map, considerably enlightened upon the subject of Eastern geography.

My own map, or rather the map I had given the Khaun, was called for, and the Mehtur begged me to point out the British and the Russian dominions. "Ah," he said, "Russia is larger than England."

"You are mistaken. This very question was the subject of a bet between the English and the Russian missions at Tehraun, which, after the most careful investigation, was decided in favour of the English. England has absolutely more territory, about five times the number of subjects, and several times more revenue than Russia. But this is not all; for a glance at the map will shew you, that the water of the world exceeds, about three times, the dry land, and, wherever the ocean rolls, there my Queen has no rival."

We then fell into conversation upon the habits of Europe.

"Are you fond of hawking?" he enquired: "does your Queen hawk?"

"My Queen is an accomplished rider, but hawking, although much practised in former days, is at present almost impossible in England, owing to the high state of cultivation."

"But in the wilderness?"

"We have no wilderness; at least the few scraps left by the plough may be several days' journey (*i.e.*

Eastern days of journey) distant. The whole country is like a garden."

"But you could ride over the fields?"

"The fields, in England, are each a separate garden, so to speak, enclosed with ditches and a wall of thorny trees; the entrance being a high gate on hinges. Now, as it is necessary, in following the falcon, to keep the eye ever fixed on the heavens, it is impossible to hawk over enclosed fields; but we follow the stag, the fox, and hare."

"But how, over these walls?"

"We teach our horses to leap them."

"That must be dangerous. Our horses cannot leap."

"We account this the most exciting circumstance of the chase, because it tries the mettle of the horse, the courage and skill of the rider."

"Do the English eat Khook (pig)?"

"Eat what?" I inquired, very innocently.

"Khook" (pig).

"What is Khook?"

Now, neither the Mehtur nor the interpreter having ever seen a pig, in all their lives, it was no easy matter for them to describe the unclean beast. The interpreter commenced a clumsy attempt; I heard him out patiently, and then said—

"You mean that animal with long ears and a sweet voice. The Khur (ass). No! we never eat anything so unclean."

This was a back stroke at the Oozbegs, which I thought might be useful. They devour the wild ass.

"I don't mean the Khur," persisted the interpreter,

"I mean Khook, Khook," looking me in the eyes.

"Don't you know what Khook is?"

I hadn't the slightest intention of knowing. "Khook," I repeated dreamily, with a lamb-like stare of innocence; "Khook. Oh! you mean that big bird with red cheeks, that flaps his wings and wakes us in the morning; yes, we eat him."

"No! I don't mean the cock; but Khook, Khook."

"Well then," I said, if it is neither beast nor fowl, perhaps it is a fish."

The interpreter could not, in politeness, press the matter farther. The question, I well understood to proceed from anything but idle curiosity. The knowledge, that the English are a pig-eating generation, would have been, at that moment, an effectual barrier to all alliance between the states; for a hearty detestation of pork may be said to be the only vital spark surviving, in the religion of him of Mecca. My own servants had not a suspicion of our monster-eating propensities. For they had seen me slay several plump wild hogs, and leave the carcasses in the field—a necessary precaution, which every member of the mission equally observed.

Ah! ye luscious, cosy ones of the earth! ye savory haunched Tuscans! Beloved of Achilles and Theseus! Not abhorred of the all-beauteous Helen! How often hath my heart bled, my mouth watered in vain, as I left you to the foul jaws of the grave-digging Hyæna, the fouler beak of the loathsome vulture! Visit not, with lean haunches, my involuntary crime! Think of the glorious amends I made you in London, when out of eye-shot of the faithful Summud Khaun! Think, ye jolly ones, of the thin red slices, deep set in consolidated marrow, edged with melting amber, stuck with cloves from the Indian Isles! Say, did I not make amends in those few days, by the keenness

of my gusto, for seventeen years of lean abstinence from your classic bounties, eaten to the tune of "fresh rolls and golden butter," digested (O! forgive me) beneath the inspiring influence of my native skies!

My time passed heavily enough at Khiva. I had once gone forth to see the King's garden and palace, but I was attended by the Major Domo, and received a hint, that it might be as well not to speak to, nor even to look, attentively, at anyone I might happen to meet. On visiting the Mehtur afterwards, he inquired what I had made the dimensions of the garden, and seemed incredulous, when I assured him I had made no measurements. This little incident was a lesson to me, to prefer complete seclusion, to the humiliation of being dogged by spies, and of being myself suspected of spying out the nakedness of the land. I had early perceived, that the main difficulty at Khiva, and my most important duty, would be, to win confidence, in spite of all the engines set on foot, to render me suspected. I was not without my share of curiosity, and knew of how much consequence to the learned world are all particulars, relative to the Oxus and the Sea of Aral, which I had long thirsted to visit. But I remembered, that in a few months, could I only win the confidence of the Khaun, all these objects would be open to our investigation, and that my own political duties could not, for an instant, be weighed against those relating only to science. I therefore resigned with a sigh, but without jealousy, to some more fortunate successor, discoveries quite within my reach, but which prudence forbad me to stretch my hand to grasp.

I had brought with me a few oft-perused books,



which were some relief to the tedium of my imprisonment ; but my furniture was so miserable, that I had little temptation to use the pen ; an exercise, during which I was obliged to bolt my door ; and, indeed, I dared not make any memoranda, which sent to Heraut, and opened on the road by the Khaun, might have seemed to him the production of a spy ; or which, falling into the hands of Russia, would have been useful hints to her, in her designs upon Khiva. Certain very important particulars, of which a copy had been sent to Cabul, and which I wished to bear to the British ambassador at St. Petersburg, lest the said copy should be lost, I travestied, threw into verse, and committed to memory, destroying the paper. They are curious, but cannot just now see the light.

At my next audience, speaking of Colonel Stoddart, the Khaun said, "I hear, that the Russian ambassador at Bokhara applied to the Ummeer, for Colonel Stoddart's freedom, and that he should be delivered, for the purpose, to the Russian government. That, upon this, the Ummeer summoned Colonel Stoddart, and asked him whether the Russians were likely to treat him well, and what he thought of the proposal ; and that Colonel Stoddart replied, 'The Russians would undoubtedly treat me well ; but when my own Government demands me, what will your highness answer ?' That the Ummeer was much struck with the nobleness of such an answer, from one who was in prison, and in hourly danger of death ; and taking off his own rich cloak of sables, made them clothe Colonel Stoddart in it, and lead him, on horseback, through Bokhara." This anecdote, which the Khaun fully credited, I have not, to this day, means

of confirming or contradicting. It accords so well, however, with the spirit of this high-minded officer, whose sufferings were paralleled only by his fortitude, that I had no difficulty in believing it. General Perroffski afterwards confirmed the fact of his attempt to release Colonel Stoddart.

My approaching journey was discussed. "What retinue did I require?"

The Khaun Huzurut knew best what was necessary to guard me through his territory: but I thought that three or four Russian slaves, placed at my disposal, might facilitate matters, serving as an earnest of the Khaun's intention to free the remainder, and acting as guides and interpreters to me upon the Russian frontier. The Khaun readily promised I should have them, and gave orders to that effect to the Mehtur, who, by a manœuvre, eventually deprived me of them. I referred to my late discussions with the Mehtur, and enquired the route *viâ* the Balkaun. He replied, that the people of those parts, Yahmoot Toorcumuns, were in open rebellion to his authority, and were plunderers by profession. He could not, therefore, secure my safety by that route. But that, farther north, was the port of Mungh Kishlaurk, whence the Bokhara caravans embark for Astrakhan, and *vice versa*. That the distance was about 16 days' journey from Khiva, *i.e.* 480 miles. That the Caspian was at present frozen, but that inquiries should be set on foot respecting this route, and the Toorcumun chief of those parts be called to consult with me. I urged strongly the vital necessity of despatch; but the Khaun answered, that the roads at present were closed by the snow, and the Caspian by the ice. That were I now to start, I should, in all probability,

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be brought back a cripple, like his Toorcumun horsemen. I replied, that I would run any risk to myself, rather than incur the detention, which would be certain ruin to my project. But that I would clothe myself and servants in furs, and had no apprehension. He asked, whether I did not find my scanty European dress much too light for the climate. I explained, that it had been made in Hindoostaun, of which the climate is very warm. That in England, we wore a dress of similar fashion, but admitting of several under-garments.

“England, then, is cold. Is it as cold as Khiva?”

“The cold there is of a different character; here it is excessively dry, with little wind and a clear sky; in England the sky is generally overcast, there is much wind, and too much rain.”

“How then can the people exist, with such a dress?”

“Our houses in England are better adapted to exclude the weather; they have a chimney in each room, glass windows, and floors of plank.”

“Yes, your rich men’s houses. But what do the poor do?”

“The poor have glass windows, chimneys, and floors of plank. The house of a labourer in England is far more comfortable than the palace of a nobleman in Persia or Heraut.”

“But your poor cannot be always at home.”

“When abroad they are either walking or labouring, either of which occupations keeps them warm; and besides, their dress is of thicker materials than mine, and its closeness to the body excludes the wind better than does the loose dress of Khiva.”

“When you come to see me, put on your warm

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Asiatic dress. You look cold in that which you wear."

I bowed.

"Have you any telescopes with which you can see the interior of a fort or house? I have heard of an Englishman who had one."

"No; we have telescopes that turn people head downwards,\* which, perhaps, has given rise to your Majesty's idea, and we have instruments for measuring from a distance the height of the walls; but we have none that would shew us the interior from without." I then described Herschel's grand telescope. He asked the use of it. I replied that each planet had its own peculiar form, which could be ascertained by means of a telescope; that the moon, in particular, appeared drawn so near that we could make maps of her surface; that by means of telescopes we had discovered planets that were not previously known to exist, and fixed stars where, to the naked eye, there appeared but a void in the heavens.

"Do you practise astrology?"

"No; we make many calculations by the position of stars, of the sun, and of the moon, but we do not believe that the destiny of man can be discovered thereby."

"Is your king really a woman?"

"She is."

The Khaun smiled, and all his satellites, as in duty bound, giggled.

\* When surveying in Rohilkund, I once occupied the castle of a village in the Shahjehanpoor district, and exhibited to the principal Zumeendar the effects of my night telescope, which inverts objects. A report got abroad that I had a telescope which sets people, at any distance, on their heads, and all the women of the village were instantly shut up, lest I should take this liberty with them.

"How," he inquired, "can she rule, being roo-posh (concealed)?"

"Our females, like those of the Toorcumuns, are not concealed. The Queen of England has ministers, who transact business for her."

"Are they women?"

"No, they are men. They receive their general instructions from the Queen, and act accordingly."

"But how can your Queen administer justice?"

"Our kings do not, like your Majesty, administer justice in person; there are Cauzies appointed for the purpose. These commit the proceedings and the evidence to paper; and in cases of life and death the Queen reads the particulars, and confirms or annuls the sentence by a stroke of her pen."

"Do you always choose women as your kings?"

"No, we give preference to heirs male; but when there is a female and no male, rather than disturb the country by introducing a new family of claimants of the crown, we crown this female. One of the greatest of our kings was a woman."

"Is your king married?"

"No; she is very young."\*

"But she will marry?"

"Inshallah."

"And if she marry, does her husband become king?"

"By no means. He has no authority in the state." Here there was some more smiling.

"How many cities has your king?"

"They are too numerous to be computed."

"Russia," said the Khaun, "has four hundred,

\* I did not hear of Her Majesty's marriage until several months after this conversation.

Hindoostaun two hundred, but China has the greatest number. Do you know anything of China?"

"We have merchants there."

"It is the most powerful of empires."

"We do not consider it such. About five-and-twenty years ago we sent thither an ambassador in a gun-ship; the Emperor insisted that he should knock his head on the ground seven times on entering the presence; he refused, but consented to bow seven times, provided the prime minister of China would do the same before a picture of the king of England. The Emperor, in great wrath, ordered the guns of his fort to open upon the ambassador's ship. The ambassador's ship returned the salute with about forty heavy guns, and speedily destroyed the castle. The Chinese have neither army nor fleet, but their country is highly populous and productive."

I give the last anecdote as I related it, but although I believe the main facts are correct, I may very possibly have failed in the minutiae; my remembrance of Lord Amherst's Embassy not being very distinct.

## CHAPTER IX.

Delay in my Mission, and the impatience under it—Cross Examination upon Articles of Faith—Kawff—Baub-ool-Mandeb—People and Customs of Hindoostaun—Mungh Kishlauh Guide—His Testimony—Another Audience—Inhabitants of the Ocean—Fish—Serpents—Sub-marine Sailing—Gun Vessels—Sea Fights—Towns in the Sea—Magic—Contrivances as Wonderful in Common Use by the British—Steam Looms—Mints—Telegraphs—Steam Vessels and Steam Carriages—Our Well of Alchemy—Origin of the Ducat—Private Intelligence—Extreme Anxiety of the Khaun Huzurut to effect Colonel Stoddart's Release, and bring him to Khiva.

SEVERAL days elapsed, since the Khaun had expressed his determination to use my services: but the day of departure seemed as distant as ever. I fretted with impatience at a delay, which threatened to render my agency vain. The Khaun Huzurut in reply said, that the roads were not yet open, that the direct route, *via* Orenburgh, was buried five feet beneath the snow, and that the Caspian was still frozen. I said, that I would run any risk, rather than the failure of my mission, which delay must occasion. That if it were necessary to await the breaking up of the ice from the Caspian, I had better do so on the shores of that sea, to be always watching my opportunity, lest the first boat should escape me. But I could, at any rate, even now try the Orenburgh route, which, by one properly clad and mounted, might be passed.

I was summoned to an audience of the Khaun Huzurut. In the Mehtur's palace I found an unusual assembly, of which the Khojeh Mhirahm, the Nuqqeeb and several other priests formed the conspicuous group. After the withdrawal of the usual symbols of hospitality, the Mehtur commenced a cross examination relating to our religious tenets. The Khaun, it appears, was in dread, or some of his holy men were so for him, lest he should commit his affairs to an idolater or other unholy person.

"Are the Russians Christians?"

"They so profess themselves."

"Do they worship images?"

"They employ images\* and pictures in their worship."

"Do the English employ such?"

"By no means. It is now about three hundred years since England separated herself from those nations who use such symbols, believing it to be a forbidden custom."

"What do you think of God?"

"That He is a Spirit, without figure or material substance. That He is one, and has no partaker of His deity. That He has existed from all eternity, and will exist for ever. That He is pure, holy, almighty, and omniscient."

"And which way do you turn when you address God in prayer?"

"We turn towards God."

"Where is He?"

"Everywhere, above, below, around; creation is filled with His presence."

\* This I believe was a mistake: they use pictures, but not statues.



"We turn towards Mecca."

"And *we*, towards God."

"What do you do with your dead?"

"We bury them in the earth."

"How do you turn the bodies?"

"We have no order on this head, but I believe they are generally laid east and west."

"Do you believe in the resurrection?"

"We do."

"What do you believe of it?"

"That at the appointed day, the dead shall arise. They who have done good to life everlasting, and they who have done evil to the torments of hell."

"We believe the same. Do you believe that Christ shall come again?"

"It is so written in our books, that at the resurrection, Christ shall appear, to judge the quick and the dead."

"But do your people expect him now immediately?"

"There have, ever since the death of Christ, been men so simple as to interpret the Gospel thus. But it is not the general belief of Christians, nor of any of the sober-minded amongst them." This was a ticklish subject, at the moment of a panic, caused by the Christian arms.

"Do you believe Christ to be the Son of God?"

"What do *you* call him?"

"He was the son of Huzurat Mariam."

"And his father?"

They could not answer this. "But what," I added, "do your own books call him?" Another pause. "Do they not call him Rooh-oollah—the Spirit of God? Will you explain this. The spirit of a spirit.

I will then inform you, why *we* call him, as he called himself, the Son of God."

They had no answer. To my accomplished and ever-honoured friend Major Todd, Envoy at Heraut, I was indebted for this query, which is unanswerable by an orthodox Muhummedan.

"You don't use images or pictures in your worship."

"No; I have already assured you that we regard it as senseless and forbidden, because God is without form, and He alone is to be worshipped."

"But the Russians use them?"

"I have heard that they do."

"And what do you say of those who do so?"

"We say that they are unwise."

"Do you not call them Kawfurs (Infidels)?"

"Kawfur is a term of reproach, and we are commanded to bestow no ill names upon fellow-men, for we are all alike the work of God's hand. Idolatry is simply ignorance. No man, knowing that God is without form, would worship an idol."

"God's hand you say. Has God hands?"

"I spoke figuratively. God is a spirit, and has no members."

"But the Russians are Christians?"

"They so call themselves."

"And they worship images. The English are Christians, do they not the same?"

"Are you a Kawfur? I have twice told you, that the English do not worship idols, are not Kawfurs. How do you like being asked if you are a Kawfur? If you do not like it, why do you insult your guest by the question?"

This I said with much assumed warmth of manner, for I was anxious to close a discussion, that might be

embarrassing if carried farther. The Mehtur apologised, and begged me not to be affronted. The interpreter, at a signal from him, discontinued the questions, which had all been concocted and written down for the occasion. What followed were matters of curiosity.

“Have you ever seen the mountains of Kawf?”

“Never; but many of our travellers have crossed them.”

“Indeed; where are they?”

“They separate Persia from Roume.”

“These are not the mountains I allude to. I mean those, in which Alexander the great shut up Gog and Magog and the jins, in large caverns.”

“These are the very same.”

“No! no! The Kawf, I mean, has never been seen, and cannot be crossed. The first morning shews itself, through a chink in these mountains, which are far away to the east, but nobody knows where. You say that Colonel Stoddart has sailed round the world, did he never see them?”

“Not the Kawf you allude to, but he has probably seen the mountains which we, the Persians and Turks, call Kawf, although their present name is Elboorz, for he was long in Persia.”

“Have you ever seen Baub-ool-Mandeb (I believed this was the name), where an angel stands whirling a fiery sword?”

“The entrance to the Arabian sea is so called, but I have never heard of the angel.”

“The next question related to some well in Hindostaun, where some other angel dwelt, or was confined, but it has escaped my memory.”\*

\* Perhaps the well in Lughman from which tempests arose when it was defiled.

“How is Hindoostaun peopled?”

“Chiefly by two races, the Hindoos and the Moosulmauns: the first being the original inhabitants, the second descendants of the soldiers of Sooltaun Maimood of Ghuzni, who was a Toork, although his soldiers were generally Afghauns; and descendants of the soldiers of Timoor Lugh, who were Moguls. The number of my Queen’s Muhummedan subjects exceeds the entire population of Khaurism and Bokhara. They are undisturbed in the exercise of their faith, and their rights and property are as secure as those of Englishmen. The bulk of our Indian cavalry, those employed at Cabul, are Moosulmauns, generally Soonnies. This will shew you how absurd are the reports made to the Khaun by our enemies, that we cast the Koraun into the ditches at Kabul. Such an act would lose us, in all probability, our empire in India.”

“Are there any men in India who worship dogs?”

“I have heard of none; one of their idols has the shape of a monkey, another has an elephant’s head. The cow is sacred, and they will not kill the wolf, nor the most deadly of their snakes, because they are sacred to the Goddess of Destruction. Their most extraordinary superstition is the tenderness some of them have for animal life. This is carried so far, that lands are left by the pious to feed men who are to feed upon their bodies the lice and descendants of the lice of the testator.”

These topics were continued, to the extreme amusement of all the company, but the rest of the conversation has escaped me.

The Mehtur, who had been summoned by the Khaun, now returned and asked me whether I wished

to go to St. Petersburg. I replied that I wished to do exactly as the Khaun Huzurut might command; that for myself the undertaking was fraught with peril, not only to my life, but to my fame; for, if it should not succeed, I should be in disgrace with both my own Government and the Khaun Huzurut: that, nevertheless, I was quite ready to go, and saw the necessity of losing no time in doing whatever was to be done; for the snow was fast melting, and opening the road of the Russian advance. He assured me I should be speedily under weigh, and added that the Orenburgh route not being open, the Khaun Huzurut thought I had better proceed by Mungh Kishlaurk. To this I readily assented; and a Kuzzauk of that neighbourhood was introduced, in a sheepskin cloak and wolfskin bonnet, both with fur inverted; who gave a satisfactory assurance of the feasibility of that route.

I then attended the Khaun Huzurut. He was as usual very gracious; asked whether I had selected my route, whether I had consulted the guide, and when I should be ready to start. I replied that I was given to understand His Majesty preferred the Mungh Kishlaurk route, a sentiment in which I heartily concurred; that I had consulted the guide, and would be ready to start in three days, provided that orders were given to allow me to make the requisite purchases. He then asked many questions relating to Europe. "Was it true that the ocean contains monstrous fish?"

"Quite true; I had seen many that were upwards of fifty feet in length, and had walked in the skeleton of another of ninety feet."

"Are there any sea-serpents?"

“ There are, undoubtedly, in the sea, serpents of ordinary size. I myself have seen many. But it is reported that the sea contains a serpent of enormous size, upwards of 100 feet in length and of great thickness, with head and long mane like those of the horse; which it elevates to a great height above the waters. This I had *not* seen, and its existence was doubtful.”

“ Is it true that your ships sail under water? ”

“ It is not true; we have machines by which we can descend safely and remain at the bottom of the sea. Indeed an American invented one, in which a man could travel about under water. Its object was, to convey and fix to the bottom of enemies' ships boxes filled with gunpowder, to be ignited by means of a lock connected with clock-work.”

“ I have heard that your ships carry guns.”

“ This is quite true; the largest vessels have 130 or 120 guns, the medium 74, carrying balls of 32 or 64 lbs.”

“ What is the use of these guns? Do ships ever fight? ”

“ Ships of different nations have the most terrible engagements. It sometimes happens that the guns on either side amount to 1500. A ship of 120 guns fires sixty guns at once at the same enemy, and that when the ships are grappling. No battles on land can compare for terror with sea engagements: sometimes a shell or a red-hot shot falls into the powder-magazine of a vessel, and its crew of 1200 souls are blown to atoms. But ships are also employed to take towns and fortresses.”

“ What! are there towns in the sea? ”

“ Yes, there are towns on lands surrounded by the

sea; there are many others by the sea-side. St. Petersburg is one of these. Such towns can be destroyed by ships of war. England is surrounded by the sea. Your Majesty has outposts of horsemen on your frontiers, who place a single sentinel on watch, to prevent intrusion: instead of that sentinel, *we* plant a ship of seventy-four guns, which flits to and fro, day and night, about the point it is to guard, and suffers nothing hurtful to enter. Your Majesty's sentry carries, perhaps, a matchlock; my Queen's sentry carries seventy-four of the largest guns, and 700 armed men."

"Do the English practice magic?"

"No! but they have machines and inventions more wonderful. Looms with wheels innumerable, moved by steam, that weave cloth, almost without the direct agency of man. Mints worked by steam, which coin silver at the rate of 100,000 pieces a day; and at which men are employed only to feed the machine. Telegraphs, by which we can send news, the distance of four hundred miles, in two hours. Steam vessels that move in the teeth of a gale; and steam carriages that travel at the rate of forty miles an hour; so that, were such introduced into the Khaun Huzurut's dominions, people might start this evening from Khiva and dine to-morrow at Heraut, which, at present, is a journey of twenty-two days."

The Khaun Huzurut inquired the nature of our telegraphs.

At that time I had not heard of the application of galvanism to this purpose. I said, "they were of two kinds, one a series of towers, at long distances, upon which flags were displayed, as signals one to the other, these flags being moved by machinery into

different figures, for each of which there is a corresponding word or sentence known to those stationed at the towers. The other process was effected by means of thin iron tubes, running under ground from station to station, and filled with water. This water, being struck at one end, rises instantly at the other and strikes a little drum or bell; the number of pulsations giving the word or sentence to be communicated." For want of terms common to the two languages, and, indeed, from my imperfect knowledge of Persian, I found it very difficult to explain these things. But the importance of the telegraph seemed to be felt by the Khaun. He inquired, if it would not be possible to introduce it into his dominions.

I replied, that it was not impossible, but would be a very difficult task, and the expense would be in proportion, as chains of towers must be erected at intervals of fifteen miles; each of these towers must have a telegraph, telescopes, and an establishment of intelligent men to make and receive signals.

"I have heard from good authority that you have wells of such wonderful property that lead or iron dipped into them becomes silver, and copper is changed into gold. Is this the case?"

"By no means."

"Whence, then, do you get the ducat, which, every one knows, is made thus?"

"The ducat is not an English coin, but the currency of several other states of Europe. It is made, like other gold coins, of gold found in mines. As for British gold, the commerce and credit of the entire world is our well of alchemy."

I was now dismissed, and returned full of hope of



speedily departing on my mission — a mission, fraught with peril and perplexity, yet in which every hope and interest was embodied. My secret intelligence tallied very well with what I observed. The Khaun had been assailed by those who affirmed that they knew me for a Russian spy, and that the English were only a clan of Russians, but, by cross-examining the Persian ambassador, he had got the better of these suspicions. At the same time, it had been represented to him, that the English are a nation very jealous of insult, and very chary of the blood of their people; that, although they never break treaty, they never forgive the death of a fellow-subject; and that they might, should any evil befall me on the journey, attribute it to treachery, and make it subject of quarrel; hence all the expedients used to make me beg to be sent to St. Petersburg. This was a point I had been unwilling to concede at first, from fear that it might strengthen suspicion of some connivance with Russia, and, latterly, for the sake of consistency. One cause of delay, I was assured, was the desire of the Khaun to get Colonel Stoddart over to Khiva, either that he might send him, and reserve me as a hostage, or reverse that arrangement. Colonel Stoddart was represented to him as a very tall man, who wore a cocked hat and plume, and this, and the efforts made for his release, had given the Khaun a great idea of his rank and consequence.

## CHAPTER X.

Interview with the Mehtur—The Book—Audience—Account of the murdered Strangers—Purchase of Ummeer Beeg's Freedom—Minister's Love of Watches and of Calomel—The Air-gun—Paper Kite of Khaurism—Its musical Properties—Its Mechanism.

WHEN next I saw the Mehtur, he asked what documents would be requisite for my mission. I informed him. He sent for his interpreter, and for a book, handsomely bound and secured by a lock of gold set with turquoises. This he opened, and read aloud at several parts. It was in Toorkish, and seemed to be a register of letters, written by Kings of Khaurism to other potentates. He asked me several particulars, and seemed much at a loss how Her Majesty of England was to be addressed, being a female. I explained to him the nature of the form, usual on such occasions.

In the evening I attended the Khaun Huzurut. The particulars of this audience are not all fresh in my remembrance. After some preamble, he observed, "Two travellers arrived at Khiva, some time ago, calling themselves Englishmen. They came from Meshed, and were attended by five Persian servants. It was told me that they were Russians, and I demanded their passports, or other testimonials. They had none, and had entered my territories and capital

without permission or report. I ordered, that they should be searched and cross-examined. They proved to be Russians, and I gave orders for their execution."

He related all this with a pleasant countenance: but, it may be believed, I heard it with feelings in which indignation mingled. The travellers, indeed, if Russians, were spies, and therefore justly treated; and, if of any other nation, had no business there without the testimonials necessary to identify them, or without compliance with the usages of the country. There was also no doubt, that they were supposed to be Russian spies when executed. But still, to the native of a free and civilized land, such murders (and death without open trial deserves no better name) appear both cowardly and horrible. I could not express indignation at an act, just, according to the notions of the country; but I expressed my deep regret that the Khaun Huzurut should so have acted, and my voice perhaps expressed something more. "If," I added, "your Majesty had imprisoned or otherwise secured them. But God alone can restore life."

"It certainly is a pity," said the Khaun, with a good-humoured smile, and in the tone in which mere mortals speak of the death of rats, "but they were Russians and spies, and arrived at a moment when I was incensed by the seizure of my ambassador. They called themselves English, but were proved to be Russian spies. At that time, I had never heard of such a nation as the English. Some days subsequently, the gallantry of an Englishman (Captain Pottinger, the hero of Héraut) was reported to me, and I inquired who the English were. No one could

satisfy me, but the most learned were of opinion, that the English were a petty tribe (Taifah) of the Russians. Soon after this, news was brought me, that the English had conquered Hindostaun, and were invading Cabul."

The Khaun then inquired, what assurance I had that the Russians would not murder, or at any rate arrest me? I replied, that our Governments were at peace. That an English ambassador was at St. Petersburg, a Russian ambassador at London. That amongst the nations of Europe free intercourse was maintained between the states until declaration of hostilities, and that Russia had too great respect for Great Britain to molest a British subject.

The Khaun remarked, that they had arrested all his ambassadors.

Such things, I said, might occur where retaliation was impossible; but that the capitals of Great Britain and Russia were only ten days' sail apart, and that the naval and military force of England were too formidable to be trifled with.

At my next interview with the Mehtur, certain letters were produced, and translated from Toorkish into Persian, for my information. I took copies, and corrected several capital errors; I discussed with him other public business, and then pressed upon him the release of the Goolaum, Ummeer Beeg, reminding him of his oft-repeated promise to release him.

"What," said he, "will you give me for him?" It is to be observed that he had promised to free him without price.

"Any fair price."

"You shall have him for a thousand ducats."

"Such a sum was never given for a slave, unless

he were a chief. Forty ducats would be a large price, but, for the sake of friendship, I will give you a hundred."

"I won't take money for him ; I will give him for your watch."

This was a hard bargain, but I could not for an instant hesitate to end, by any sacrifice of sentiment, the misery of poor Ummeer Beeg, so I drew out and gave him my faithful companion, and he promised that the Goolaum should be released, a promise of which the execution was long deferred. Ummeer Beeg was a Government servant, and his release formed part of my instructions. I did not, therefore, scruple to charge Government the price of an ordinary silver watch ; though, had it been necessary, I had willingly stripped myself of all my property to procure the freedom of this gallant fellow.

The Mehtur was as delighted with the watch as I have seen a child with his first rattle. But far from being contented with this addition to his stock of three or four, he begged me to write to the British envoy and minister at Cabul for another ; adding, that no number of watches would satisfy him, and that he very much desired a night telescope. He also begged for some more calomel, but this I declined, regretting that I should already have suffered his solicitations to prevail. I was curious to know the purpose for which he required it. He had obtained the former supply upon pretence of some alchemical experiment. He now assured me that he took it daily. I remonstrated in the strongest terms against the folly of employing this medicine idly ; telling him its horrible effects, but he only laughed. Mercury is a nostrum, to which Asiatics

ascribe many miraculous properties ; for instance. the determining of the sex of the child to be begotten. He afterwards pressed me for what he called warm medicines, to invigorate the constitution. I am very dull at such hints, being myself a water drinker ; and he was at length obliged to state pretty broadly the nature of the medicine in request, to wit, brandy or other spirits. I assured him I had none, and never used such things. I could indeed have procured him a supply from the Jews and Hindoos, who, in spite of priestly and royal edicts, make this article for the nobles of Khiva, had I deemed it either a safe or respectable means of ingratiating myself with him.

As I had now completed the repairs of the Khaun's air-gun, I exhibited it, to his great astonishment and delight. I shewed him how to use the pump, to load and discharge the piece, and explained to him, by means of the former, the principle of the steam engine. I was not present when it was taken to the Khaun, but understand that he was equally delighted.

In riding home, poor Ummeer Beeg, whose release I had just purchased, came and kissed my hand. I begged him, for the present, to keep aloof, lest he should incense his master against him ; telling him, I doubted not he would be set free in a few days.

Seeing some children on the road with their paper kites, I approached to examine the contrivance by which these toys emit a musical sound whilst floating in the air. The contrivance is very simple, and quite worthy of adoption into England. The kite is a square, formed upon two diagonals of light wood, whose extremities are connected by a tight string, forming the sides of the square. Over the whole paper is pasted. A loose string upon the upright

diagonal receives the string by which the kite is to be held, and a tail is to be fastened to its lower extremity. The transverse diagonal or cross-stick is then bent back like a strung bow, and so fastened by a cat-gut. Of course, every breeze that passes the kite vibrates this tight cord, and the vibrations are communicated to the highly sonorous frame of the kite. And, as numbers of these kites are left floating in the air all night, the effect is that of aerial music; monotonous, but full of melancholy interest. On my first arrival at Khiva, I was much struck with this novel, dreamy melody, which continued the live-long night. My servants had assured me it proceeded from the Jew's harps, which the women of Khiva are fond of playing, and that the Mehtur, whom I had once asked about it, turned pale with anger, thinking that, like the last ambassador from Heraut, I had been serenaded by the fair ones of Khiva. Alackaday! no such good fortune was mine.

## CHAPTER XI.

Feast given by the Khaun Huzurut—Arrangement of Guests—Purgatory of Knees and Ancles—Persian Ambassador—Punishment of Dinner-odoxy—Inauk of Huzarusp—The Bee—An Oozbeg Dinner—Holy Ardour of the Priests—Accounted for upon Muhummedun Principles.

A FEW days subsequent to the Mohurram the master of ceremonies waited upon me, and informed me that the Khaun Huzurut had prepared a feast, at which he requested my attendance. He added, that as I should have to sit a long space, I had better dress in my Asiatic attire; and it was suggested that I should wear the Oozbeg cap, sent me by the Khaun, instead of my turban of white muslin. This was probably to avoid scandal to the priesthood, who alone, in these countries, wear white turbans, and who were to be there in full divan.

I went accordingly at the hour appointed, and was ushered into a large hall of the palace, in which I found assembled some sixty or seventy persons, chiefly, priests. The principal of these, the Sheikhool-Islaum, was seated at the head of the room. On the right hand, an unbroken line of priests succeeded, seated kneeling, their backs against the wall. A member of the royal family divided the place allotted me, from the lowest of these priests. A space was left vacant on the left of the room, below the principal



priests, but above the rest of that line. This was afterwards occupied by the Inauk of Huzarusp (brother to the king) and the Bee (I cannot give the sound by any other arrangement of letters), son of the predecessor of Madreheem Khaun, the present Khaun's father. All sat in profound silence; I gave them "the Salaam alikoom" and took my seat, a little disgusted at finding it so low. The head Moolla assured me I was welcome, and asked several questions, some relating to the distance of places; whether Shauh Shoojah had not married a daughter of England, and whether the English were really masters of India, &c. &c. On all which points, I satisfied the curiosity of his holiness.

Meanwhile the priests sat, very much like a couple of rows of jackasses in the mood digestive; eyes earth-fastened in deep abstraction, and heads hanging, like gourds, at various angles with the body. None but the Sheikh-ool-Islaum ventured to utter a word, and the few, which I addressed to the sprig of royalty beside me, were answered with screwed-up mouth and knitted brows alone. It was evidently not etiquette to converse at so solemn a banquet.

My knees and ancles now began to give me the most exquisite torture. None but a creature so stiff-jointed as myself, can imagine how much I suffered from this posture, in spite of considerable practice. Once, at an audience of Shauh Kaumraun, when attempting to rise from the torturous posture prescribed by etiquette, I fairly fell on my face, unable to support the weight of my body, upon my almost dislocated ancles. I now sounded the royal sprig, to know whether I could, without indecorum, shift my posture; but my sole answer was glum

looks; and the Sheikh-ool-Islaum was at so great a distance, that I hesitated to make the uproar, necessary to attract his attention. At length flesh and blood got the better of shame, and I exclaimed, "I am in great pain, excuse my shifting my posture."

The effect was quite electric. All the hanging gourds of heads, all the half-closed mutton eyes, all the pendulous tympana that garnish those hanging excrescences, were suddenly upraised, awakened as from a trance, and fixed upon me in startled horror; whilst, with infinite pain and difficulty, I unbent my knees, and twisted them into the posture by tailors loved.

We had sat thus, I think, a full hour, when in marched the Persian ambassador, a handsome fellow, evidently of the Gujjur tribe.\* He had all the ease of the higher orders of his countrymen; and he needed all, in an assembly of the most virulent enemies of his religious creed, who, moreover, could scarcely be supposed in the best of humours with one, who had kept dinner waiting a mortal hour; an offence not easily pardoned by churchmen, and equivalent in most countries to a charge of heresy. He took his seat on the side of the room opposite mine, *i.e.* the left side, and three grades lower. The Sheikh-ool-Islaum gave him welcome, and after a short pause, put him through his doctrinal facings, as an orthodox Moosulmaun. A ceremony in which Soonnies greatly delight, owing to the torture it inflicts upon their catechist, and without which no Soonnie-Moolla would condescend to hold intercourse with a Sheeah. All eyes were fixed upon the luckless ambassador, in anticipated enjoyment of his con-

\* To which belongs the present king of Persia.

fusion; but with the most perfect *sang froid*, he answered orthodoxly all the insulting questions, and held at naught all the sneers. Sheeahs having no scruple thus to act, when life would be endangered by sincerity.

This ambassador had been sent on a special mission of harmony, with the profession of belief of all Muhammedans as the message of his master to the Khaun, and had probably been instructed to make any religious concession, in order to gain his point, of which one item was the release of the 30,000 Persians, said to be slaves in Khaurism, which was equivalent to asking the Khaun to give him 900,000 ducats, or about £450,000, a sum by no means exorbitant, as the price of the service to be rendered, viz. the rescue of Khaurism from the invasion of Russia.

After about half an hour more, the Inauk of Huzarusp, brother to the Khaun Huzurut, and his cousin the Bee entered, and took their seats at the head of the left row, below the principal Moollas. To enter late is an assumption of consequence, which the Persian had exercised pretty freely. The Inauk could not have made his appearance with propriety until some time after all were assembled. The Inauk is a tall, large-built man, with high features, and an air of sound sense and intelligence. He stoops in his gait, like all natives of the country, who, when not rolled up in the saddle like sacks, are rolled up like balls upon their nummuds.\* He is considered to be a man of clear judgment and decisive character, and is, perhaps, the only real soldier in Khaurism. His stature and strength are much vaunted, and few horses, it is said, can carry him. He was dressed in

\* A carpet of felt.

a cloak of dark green, lined with fur, and, like that of the Khaun, secured or ornamented at the waist in front with a chain of gold. On his head was an Oobeg cap, of black lambskin. The Bee, who, with exception of the gold chain, was similarly attired, is a fat, heavy-looking man, who appeared to me of rather low stature. His eyes are never lifted from the earth, probably from the sense of being an object of suspicion to the Khaun, as son of the first Oobeg king of Khaurism. He is, nevertheless, treated by the Khaun with marked distinction. He is said to be amiable.

Symptoms of dinner now appeared; several long pieces of chintz were brought in, and spread around the room, opposite the company: on these were ranged flat cakes of bread; then basins of mutton broth, swimming in fat, and finally some wretched pilaus and cups of mingled butter and grape-juice. For the soup, which was served in earthenware basins, clumsy wooden ladles were at hand, but none of those exquisitely carved spoons of wood used in Persia and Afghaunistaun. I, who abhor soups and broths of all kinds, played a miserable spoon on this occasion, in spite of all the exhortations and the excellent example of him at my elbow. But I observed that the priests had entirely lost their supineness now that work was in hand. The hanging, pumpkin heads became firm set upon their stalks, the half-closed, greasy eyes shot scintillations of consuming fire upon the sacrifice; the jaws, that seemed so languid, 'twas doubtful if they could masticate anything so profane as a jelly, began their preliminary cross-cuts, and flourishes, like the shears of Gattie or of Ross, shears whose keen, vigorous slashes have many a time made us shudder for our ears.

The cloth was removed ; the cold water was poured over our greasy fingers. The fatness of the dinner was carefully wrapped in our handkerchiefs, and as carefully deposited in our pockets. We blessed God for the meal, and stroked our beards, as many, at least, as were so fortunate as to possess any. It must be confessed that the greater number of flourishes cut the impassive air, and might, to a fanciful view, have seemed as signals to Rowland and Son to hasten to the rescue. It is somewhat absurd, at first, to see a gentleman, with chin as smooth as a glass soda-water bottle, sweeping away at arm's length with all the grimace of a curly lion ; as if the dew of benediction could settle for an instant on that barren excrescence, or require both arms to gather it in. We now rose and broke up, the Inauk leading. I need hardly say, it was a welcome relief. It may here be observed that, whilst the Afghauns cook the most savoury stews and kawaubs, or fries ; the Tartars have no notion of any method of cooking meat, save that of boiling.

## CHAPTER XII.

Prospect of my speedy Departure—Extreme Difficulty of procuring Money—Promises of Shroffs and of the Minister equally false—Delay in transmitting my Despatches—Private Channel established—Liberation of Ummeer Beeg—Mutilation of his Ears by Yakoob Mehtur—Release of Twenty-two of the Daughters of the Afghauns in honour of H.M. the Queen of Great Britain—Captain Pottinger's Rescue from Captivity of some Forty or Fifty Children.

I HAD now some prospect of speedy dismissal, on my journey. I was permitted to consult a few guides, supplied by the Mehtur, and also a very intelligent Hindoo merchant, named Diaràm, on the subject of my journey. This man readily promised to supply, upon my bills, any sum I might require : and having at heart the release from slavery of two young women of the royal family of Heraut, and to send in honour to that city, a blind prince of the family of Shah Shooja-ool-Moolk, as well as to make a few presents to influential people, to keep up a good feeling toward our Government, I desired him to have in readiness 800 ducats, which he promised to do. He, however, delayed the supply of this money, and eventually declared he could not procure me a farthing. He made a profound mystery of his reasons ; but I have no doubt that the Mehtur interdicted his good offices ; for I complained of the conduct of Diaràm to him, but he took no notice of it. This put me to the

utmost inconvenience; for, depending upon this supply, and anxious to preserve in the breast of the Khaun Huzurut that good feeling which the capriciousness of despots renders obnoxious to the most trifling causes, I had, in reply to the Khaun's offer of procuring me all needful supplies, said, that I had come as the friend of the Government, and not to tax it in the hour of danger, when the Khaun would have need of all his funds and resources. In my present extremity I was obliged to apply to the Mehtur, begging he would obtain me the means of cashing bills on Heraut, for which I would give a handsome premium. He promised to do so, and I thought the matter concluded.

The Mehtur now consulted me upon the nature of the presents proper to be sent to the Emperor of Russia and Her Majesty the Queen of England. For the Emperor, I recommended rare sabres and daggers, and the beautiful, jewelled harness of the country. For my Queen, I said, it would scarcely be appropriate to present arms; horses I could not convey with me, and the country produced nothing else. But, I added, that the Khaun Huzurut had it in his power to present to Her Majesty, the Queen of England, the richest, noblest, and most acceptable of offerings.

He asked what that might be.

"The freedom," I said, "of some of the daughters of the Afghauns, who are pining in slavery at Khiva. If the Khaun will send some of these, say twenty, in honour back to their homes, I will answer for it, my Queen will esteem it the most precious of gifts, and the highest of compliments."

When this was repeated to the Khaun Huzurut,

he was much struck, and calling his favourite wife, asked her what she thought of the taste of English ladies, and a British Queen, who delighted not in rich jewels and ornaments, but in acts of mercy to the human race. He gave instant orders to carry the measure into effect. Owing, however, to the avarice of the Mehtur, who was charged with the execution, a great many old women, I was told, were of the number. I remonstrated, saying, that I had specified daughters, and not grandmothers; that some of these poor creatures had outgrown their desire to revisit Heraut. That many of them, probably, had no homes, nor any to look to, for support; and that to send the worst of any article, as a gift to a sovereign, was a species of affront. The Mehtur, however, had made his arrangements, and replied, that if my Queen desired others, the Khaun Huzurut would at any time release them, at her request. I was invited to inspect them, but from delicacy to Asiatic prejudice, would not go. The conversation in the king's haram I received from very good authority, but could not, with safety to the party, explain more.

About a week previous to this period, I had, by the most urgent remonstrances, persuaded the Khaun to place a courier at my disposal. This man had received my letters for Major Todd, Envoy at Heraut, and Sir W. M'Naghten, Envoy and Minister at Cabul, and with them a handsome present. But he evinced not the slightest symptom of moving, although the Mehtur had the effrontery to declare, that he was on his journey to Heraut. I remonstrated to no purpose; but a curious observation was elicited. I came to Khiva very ill supplied with sealing-wax, and the Russian wax there is quite useless. Some odds and



ends of Indian wax, black and dark green, were all left to me ; and with these I had secured my packets. "Why," inquired the Mehtur, "do you use dark wax?"

"Because I have got no other."

"That is not the reason. It is for fear we should break your seal."

"You would not be so mad. See what Persia has suffered by such a breach of the faith and hospitality of nations. But why could you not break a black seal?"

"Because there is no black wax at Khiva."

"And there is red wax?"

"Abundance."

It seemed pretty evident, that the idea of breaking the seal had crossed the mind of the Mehtur. The worst of it was, that should they break the seal, in all probability they would destroy the packet, to prevent discovery. I discovered also, that by a truly Asiatic spirit of economy, the messenger was destined to convoy to Heraut, when in due process of time they should be collected, the twenty-two women, whom the Khaun intended to liberate. I appealed to the Khaun himself; assured him that the most mischievous consequences might result to his own kingdom from the delay. That my Government, taking it for granted, from my silence, that I had been either murdered or imprisoned, would interest themselves no farther for the safety of His Majesty. He laughed, and said, that the courier should be instantly despatched; but the man did not really quit Khiva until twenty-one days after his receipt of my packet.

I had, however, previously despatched to Heraut packets by two separate messengers. The operation

was a delicate one: for, after receiving the packet and gold, the messenger might have taken them to the Khaun, and have received my head in exchange; and the loss of his own would have been the certain consequence of any detection; but I trusted to the power of gold, and to the firm faith in the word and promise of an Englishman, which prevails throughout these countries. One of these messengers was the old Cauzie of Yoollataun, him whose claw I had anointed with the mammon of unrighteousness.

It seems, that from that moment, I had become the subject of the honest gentleman's prayers and holy reveries. Never distilled the dulcet and emollient oil of palms upon skin more happy from the unction. Being a magistrate as well as priest, he was an excellent judge of the weight of a plump Bokhara\* Tilla, and conceived that a tree producing such superlative fruit, was worthy to be cherished by all of orthodox principles. So, after vainly endeavouring, for weeks, to satisfy his craving for my presence by dreams and reveries, he mounted his nag, and rode across the desert, 380 miles, or thereabouts, in quest of me: the scent of the golden fountain refreshing him as he proceeded. On reaching Khiva, he contrived, but in the most cautious manner, to intimate his presence to Summud Khaun; informing him that he had come to purchase the freedom of a relative, but wanted five ducats to make up the sum demanded. I immediately sent him fifteen, and with them the tiniest little packet in the world, which, I assured him, was an order on Heraut for fifteen more. The ecstasies

\* The Tilla of Bokhara is one of the purest of gold coins. Its value may be about thirteen shillings. The Tilla of Khiva is very inferior in purity and value.

of the old gentleman are indescribable. In the conveyance of despatches, liberality cannot be too strongly enjoined. The objects of a mission costing thousands, and involving interests more precious far than gold, may be defeated by grudging a few guineas for the conveyance of intelligence. But in Central Asia especially, letters are generally conveyed at risk of life, and a handsome reward is therefore just, as well as politic.

I feel myself here embarrassed by anachronisms, into which I have fallen. It was about a week previous to my departure from Khiva, that poor Ummeer Beeg, the Goolaum whose liberty I had long since purchased of the Mehtur, was at length released and sent to me. My room was full when he arrived. He threw himself at my feet, and, seizing my hand, covered it with kisses, and bathed it in his tears. I was deeply affected. The full sense of liberty can perhaps be felt only by the spirit that has fought and struggled and suffered and pined and done all but crouch to win it. The sense of all his wrongs and torments, his years of bondage, oppression, and scorn, came over him in that moment of weakness, and those were probably the first tears that since his boyhood he had known. I raised him up with the greatest difficulty; I was not ashamed of the moisture in my own eyes, as I said to him, "You have suffered long and deeply for the British Government, but your sufferings are at an end, and your reward is come. You have been despised, for our sake, by the Toorcumun and Oozbeg. You shall now be honoured and cherished by the English. Your sufferings shall be forgotten by you, to be remembered by us; that is your place, Ummeer Beeg (pointing to the highest

seat). None here has done and suffered for the Queen of England what you have; none, therefore, here is your equal in honour."

Nothing, however, could induce him to sit in my presence. He stood before me weeping like a child; every word of kindness but called forth fresh tears. It seemed that to such a spirit there was no medium between the entire mastery of his own emotions and prostration before them. I perceived, that so long as I spoke words of comfort to him, his sorrows must flow; and conjecturing all it must cost him to be seen in that unnerved condition, led the conversation to his immediate views and wishes.

"What were these? What did he desire?"

He would follow me over the world.

"It is not to me that you owe anything. I am but an agent of my Government. I should be delighted to have you with me; but I go on a most perilous and painful mission. The chances of death or captivity are greatly against me. You have suffered enough already, and shall not, with my will, suffer more. You shall return whither you please, to Heraut, or to your home in Persia."

"I *never* can return to Persia," he replied, with a gloomy look, pointing to his mutilated ears.

"You are wrong, Ummeer Beeg, they are your greatest glory:—they are testimonials of your fidelity to the British Government, and of your personal courage and gallantry. I will give you such a certificate as shall make everyone envy you the loss, and Major Todd will give you another. He bade me greet you kindly, and say: 'The Toorcumuns have cut off Ummeer Beeg's ears, but I will re-make them of gold.'"

I then asked him the particulars of his capture. It appeared that he had been entrusted by Colonel Stoddart (then at Heraut) with despatches for the British Envoy and Minister at Tehraun. That on approaching Toorbut-Sheikh-Jāmi he found himself confronted with some forty Toorcumuns. That he sate at bay with cocked carabine to parley : but being surrounded and resistance being hopeless he had submitted according to the advice of Colonel Stoddart, which forbade him to sacrifice his life for no purpose. Being placed upon a horse with his arms bound behind him, and thus carried by five of the party towards Khiva, he had remained perfectly passive for several days, until his captors had become careless regarding him. One day, whilst they all lay at full length on the sand, some smoking, others sleeping, he had contrived to loosen the fetlock of the horse which he deemed the fleetest, to creep upon its back, and to set it off at speed, in the hope of escaping. He had been instantly pursued, overtaken, thrust at with a spear which had grazed his ribs, and cruelly hacked with a sabre; for with fettered arms he had been unable to hold up or guide or properly urge his horse. In this wounded state they had carried him to Khiva and had presented him to the Khaun Huzurut, who had given him to the Prime Minister Agà Yoosuph a kind master and a good man. His people, like other Oozbegs, were cruel, especially the overseer. He was made, like a horse, to drag carts and carry heavy burthens. One day, when very ill, the overseer had insisted with blows upon his rising to work. He had sprung at and felled the overseer, and had been prevented from killing him, only by the interference of the other servants. The minister having heard

both sides of the dispute had commended his spirit and forbidden the overseer again to strike him. He had then been treated more gently. But the love of freedom had twice tempted him to escape, and twice had he been brought back by his pursuers. His kind master had pardoned him, but thenceforth he had been watched more vigilantly. Then the Mehtur Aga Yoosuph had died, and his son had succeeded him. Ummeer Beeg had, one night, contrived to get possession of a sword and of some food, and had fled again to the desert; although the nearest place of refuge is 350 miles from Khiva. But water was nowhere to be had, and he was eventually found by a Toorcumun lying apparently lifeless on the sand, and carried back to Khiva, where his new master had cut off his ears. This severity is said to have been used because he had cut down two of his pursuers; but I could not understand this part of the narrative. Ummeer Beeg could not speak of this mutilation without uttering a threat to drink the life-blood of the minister.

As soon as the room was clear, I called back Ummeer Beeg, and, making him close the door (a precaution I would recommend to all in these countries when cash is to be discussed), drew out my purse, which was full of gold, and poured it into his hands, promising him a further supply, should I be able to cash my bills. I then reminded him that he was now under British protection, and that any violence to the Mehtur would bring reproach upon us.

"You have purchased my life," he said; "if you command it the Mehtur shall live, but my palate is parched with a thirst which his heart's blood only can allay."

He stood before me a genuine child of Nature, with all the stormy power inherent to her sons. Faithful as steel to his trust, attaching himself to those who treat him kindly, and ready to avenge himself upon his oppressor. Nevertheless, his word being pledged to me not to harm the Mehtur, would, I knew, be religiously kept, and I gave myself on that score no further uneasiness. I felt how invaluable would be such a follower in the perilous and difficult enterprize before me; yet I would not for worlds have suffered him to endanger his liberty and life any further. Had he accompanied me, I believe I could have baffled all the artifices of those bent upon my destruction: but who shall say, I should have been the gainer?

I sent for a dress of honour for Ummeer Beeg. No cloak in the house was long enough by many inches, so I was obliged to purchase one expressly for him. He soon cut a very different figure in a handsome Oozbeg cap and cloak, and I desired him to look out for a good horse and handsome sabre. I was, however, unable in the end to raise money for the purchase of these articles. His release cast a gleam of sunshine upon the troublous prospect around me.

I had previously enjoyed a ray even more consolatory. The night succeeding that on which I had requested the release of the daughters of the Afghauns, a deputation came from the Khaun himself, saying that the order was issued for the release of these miserable captives; that the instant they could be collected together, they should be sent whithersoever I chose to name, and that the Khaun wished to know whether that should be Calcutta or London. I was infinitely amused by this simple query, and, with my

most grateful and heartfelt acknowledgments, begged to represent that to the sovereign of about 250 millions of subjects, the persons of twenty-two females were no great boon; whereas the happiness of a single individual of the number would be accepted as such by my Queen; that, to effect such an object, it was necessary only to restore them in honour to their own homes at Heraut; that Shauh Kaumraun would participate in the satisfaction their release would give, as they were His Majesty's subjects; and that my Queen, being a woman, would feel the compliment of selecting individuals of Her Majesty's sex for release. He departed with this message, after I had refreshed his fingers with gold; for a royal message is supposed to be always entitled to such recompense. Unfortunately, my pretty speeches having to undergo, in the first place, the purgatory of my own imperfect Persian, afterwards the rack of my interpreter's dulness, and then the wheel of the Oozbeg's asininity (if there be such a word, and if not, it is high time there be) reach the Khaun Huzurut, I suppose, very much as a fine lady would reach her ball-room chased and torn by fox-hounds—a thing of rags and tatters.

As soon as the messenger had departed, various remarks were made by my people. Old Sumnud Khaun said, "Your journey, Sir, has not been in vain."

"No," I replied, "whatever now befalls me, death, captivity, or success, I shall bless God that I have visited Khiva."

On reaching Heraut, we had found a large number of children, who had been rescued from slavery by the exertions of Major Pottinger, and were now



brought up, under proper instructors, at the expense of our Government. I confess I envied Major Pottinger more the glory of this deed, unknown and unnoticed as it was; than that which he had spread through the world as the defender of Heraut. He however had, by great exertion, by manly and determined interference, and sometimes by force of arms, effected the enfranchisement of these children. I had but to intimate the taste of a British Lady, and the fetters fell, as by magic, from the neck of the slave. "Now," I said, as I settled my head upon the bundle of clothes which served me as a pillow, "if I can but effect the exchange of the Russian and Oozbeg captives, I will leave, without an envious sigh, the glory of slaughtering their fellow men, to conquerors and kings." The prospect had in it more of difficulty than of hope, yet my labours, aided by the able and zealous exertions of Captain Shakespear, were eventually crowned with success.

## CHAPTER XIII.

The Ummeer of Bokhara's Refusal to release Colonel Stoddart—Endeavour to make me solicit the Company, on my Mission, of an Oozbeg Ambassador—And to persuade me to prefer the Orenburgh Route—Private Intelligence—Presents for the Emperor of Russia—Arrangements for the Exchange of Captives—Reasonableness of the Khaun's Propositions—His extreme Anxiety, and evident Sincerity on this Point—His Amazement at the Motion of my Pen—And Curiosity respecting my Epaulettes—His Majesty's Tribulation at my Want of a Cocked Hat and Plume—Dismissal—Réveil of Nizaum, the Sleeper of Sleepers—Visit from a Relation of Birdler Beeg—His Account of the Skirmish with the Russians—Difficulty of raising Funds—Visit from the Minister—His happy Confidence in Destiny—Heroic Spirit.

AT my next audience, the Khaun Huzurut informed me, that the Ummeer of Bokhara had sent a decided negative, to his (the Khaun's) two several remonstrances, for the release of Colonel Stoddart. The reply of the Ummeer was, "You have one English Eelchie, what would you do with another. Do you grudge my having *one*?"

I replied, that I deeply regretted the Ummeer's insanity; but that the Khaun Huzurut's friendly attention to the request of my Government, could not be impaired by the conduct of the Ummeer, but was as precious as if crowned with the desired success. I begged, in the name of my Government, to offer His Majesty the warmest thanks.

“And when will you start for St. Petersburg?”

“Whenever the Khaun Huzurut commands. I require three days only for preparation: provided that I have free liberty to purchase and to hire; and that the Bazaar shop-keepers and camel-owners be allowed to supply my wants.”\*

My route was next discussed. It had been already dictated by the Khaun Huzurut himself, after careful inquiry. But he seemed now bent upon my following the route direct to Orenburgh, and upon persuading me to solicit that an Oozbeg should accompany me as ambassador. To this I replied, “That I had adopted the route by Mungh Kishlauk at the Khaun Huzurut’s own recommendation: that if he deliberately preferred, that I should go straight to Orenburgh, I would attempt it, though I deemed it impracticable: and would take with me his ambassador if he desired me to do so. If left to follow my own judgment, I should travel by Mungh Kishlauk, and alone. He would not distinctly ask me to change the route or to take the ambassador; but he evidently wished me to solicit both arrangements.

My private intelligence stated, that this extreme anxiety to change the route, proceeded from a wish that some of the Khaun Huzurut’s people should be present, when I met the Russians, to judge by my reception, whether I was a spy or a true man, and also what degree of influence I possessed with that nation, in my capacity of British agent. This was probable enough; and the desire to send with me an Oozbeg ambassador, robbed the scheme of all appearance of a wish to destroy me.

\* At that time, no shopkeeper of Khiva dared deal with a stranger without special sanction of the Khaun.

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The presents for the Emperor of Russia were then produced. They consisted of a double-edged dagger, the handle of which was a mass of jewels elegantly set in ivory. A small head-stall studded with pure gold, in which were set rough rubies and emeralds; and an Isfahaunee sabre. The Khaun asked me what I thought of the latter. I could not judge from the scabbard.

“Draw it,” he said.

“Not in the presence of a king.”

He laughed. “You have my permission.”

I drew it accordingly, and examined the blade.

“That’s a better blade than you brought me,” observed the Khaun.

“The shape is not so perfect; but the water is finer. Your Majesty remembers that Heraut is a ruin, and that I rode post, at a few days’ notice, to place my services at the Khaun Huzurut’s disposal. Our Tosheh Khaneh (magazine of rarities) had been quite emptied, by our liberality to the king and nobles of Heraut.”

My despatches, enclosed as usual in bags of sarce-net flowered with gold, were delivered to me. They were written in Toorkish, the Court language, but a Persian translation had been given me. They are curious, but I have not permission to publish them. The Khaun Huzurut bade me read aloud to him my Persian translation, whilst his Meerza followed me, word by word, on the originals.

I then inquired, “What shall I say if the Russians object to the exchange of captives, upon the plea of distrust? The Russian slaves are much scattered in your kingdom; how are they to feel sure, that all have been restored?”

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“In that case, say that a Russian agent may come here, and shall have full power and opportunity to search for and release every Russian captive, and to carry him to Russia, provided, of course, that he wishes to return. Some have lucrative employment at Khiva, as artificers. Write this down in my presence, that you may not forget it; and add, that if the Emperor please to send me a responsible person as security, he shall receive the whole of his subjects without further demur, upon condition that mine be released when those reach Russia. Or, if the Emperor prefers to reverse the arrangement, I will send him a responsible person as a hostage, whilst he releases my subjects.”

I sent for my pen and ink, and stepping down into the dry cistern of masonry sunk in the tent, placed my paper upon the ground, and wrote as the Khaun Huzurut dictated. He made me repeat what I had written, to make sure of its accuracy, and was evidently in earnest. His astonishment at the rapid motion of the pen was great, and that it should traverse from left to right. He sent for the pen (which was of steel in a travelling case of ivory), and examined it attentively. When all was complete, he inquired—

“Who gave you those golden things (my epaulettes) on your shoulders?”

“I purchased them.”

“Did not your queen give them you?”

I was the more amused at this question, because ignorant at the time that military rank at Khiva is conferred by the Khaun himself, by the present of a dagger in a golden or silver sheath, according to circumstances. The golden scabbard entitles to the

command of a thousand horse ; the silver, of one hundred. The Father of Victory was evidently fishing to find out the consequence of the person whom he was entrusting with such high offices and authority. How he would have been horrified, could he have conjectured that the person who was giving himself such airs at his Court was still but a subaltern in his own corps, and a Captain only by brevet. It also so happened, that the epaulettes on my shoulder were those of an Ensign's rank : for, my own having been worn to pieces in hard service, I had purchased those of an Ensign whom we lost in the Bolaun Pass. These epaulettes underwent some strange vicissitudes. They were taken from me by the Kuzzauks, but afterwards surrendered ; and being similar, or nearly so, to those of a Colonel in Russia, received much homage from guards and sentinels, not to mention post-masters and inn-keepers. I replied to His Majesty—

“The queen had given me the rank which entitled me to wear them.”

“But Colonel Stoddart has a large cocked hat and plume.”

“I have just come from the wars, and a march of some 2000 miles, and have lost all my finery.”

I had secret intelligence that the Father of Victory was in much tribulation at my want of a cocked hat and plume. He could not be satisfied that I was quite the right thing, or that Russia would pay any respect to a little man in a forage cap. Colonel Stoddart had been described to him as a tall, stern man, with the hat and cock's feathers aforesaid, who would frighten the Russian Generals out of their shoes ; and I believe that, could Colonel Stoddart's

release have been effected, he would have entrusted him, in preference, with the negotiation.

I was now dismissed, but not until the Khaun Huzurut had repeated his instructions to me, respecting the release of the Russian captives. He was evidently in earnest on the subject. His manner to me was kinder than ever.

I rode home in silence, wrapped in many thoughts. How despairing had been my first visit to the palace; how triumphant my last. A Hand of Might had prepared and smoothed the way.

After thundering at the gate of my dwelling for upwards of half an hour, Nizaum, by the greatest good fortune in the world, happened to awake, and hearing certain dim sounds, which were terrifying the neighbourhood for a mile around, began to suspect there might possibly be someone at the door, and came accordingly. This man's talent for slumber amounts to genius, and commands respect accordingly.

I have nearly forgotten to mention the particulars of a visit from one of Birdler Beeg's relations, who happened to have belonged to the detachment sent by the heroic Ghoosh Beegie to sweep the Russians out of the land. I inquired how it had come to pass, that 40,000 invincibles of Khiva had received such a reverse from 400 half-starved Russians. Birdler Beeg had, I said, all the way from Heraut, vaunted to me the prowess of his brethren, and given me an impression that they were very Roostums.

"Why," he said, "we fought at great disadvantage. The snow was five feet deep, our path a deep ditch, so to speak, trampled through it, where we could make no front. The cold was so intense, that if we

let our hands down from the ample sleeves of our cloaks, to grasp a sabre or a spear, they withered in a moment. None of us wore less than four or five thick cloaks, and as many nether garments as he could procure. Of course, our arms were huge bundles of woollen cloth stiff with ice; and were as useless to us, as if they had been made without joints. Those amongst us who had sense, and the slightest regard for their ears and noses, had drawn over their heads the nose-bags of the horses, in which they had perforated two holes, as means of reconnoitring the enemy. We were, in fact, large heavy sacks of frozen cloth. The Russians, meanwhile, were sitting over fires in their trenches, amusing themselves at our expense. Now they rubbed their hands over the fire, and now they up with their muskets and shot us, and again they warmed their hands, loaded, and fired. It was fine fun for them; but we thought it no joke. And when they started in pursuit of us, the exercise kept their blood warm, and we sat on horseback wholly at their mercy, or dropped off, slaughtered like muttons, until we had the sense to take to our heels."

I had, for some time past, been most anxious about the funds necessary for my journey. As this journey had for its object the salvation of the Khaun Huzurut's kingdom, it seemed impossible that he should place in my way any insuperable difficulty; and yet the merchants of Khiva had either been instructed not to cash my bills, or else the report which began now to prevail, that the Khaun meditated my destruction, deterred them. The Mehtur, to whom I had repeatedly applied, always promised that everything should be arranged as I desired. Once I had hopes



that he would be tempted by the handsome premium I offered, to cash them from his own funds ; but this hope at length failed me. I told him, that although the journey I had in view was for the Khaun Huzurut's own interest, and my life and fame were to be perilled in his cause, yet that I did not wish to draw upon the resources of His Majesty at a moment of emergency ; but, as I could not possibly stir without money, begged he would either procure it from the bankers, or grant me a loan, upon my bills, from the royal treasury. He was profuse of promises, and it was a subject with which, as a British agent, I could not decently trouble the king himself.

The Orenburgh route was again suggested to me. Against the difficulty of feeding my suite, it was proposed that I should ride Chuppah (post) with a Kuzzauk guide and one servant. I agreed, and the guide was sent me, accompanied by an Oozbeg, who partly acted as interpreter ; the Kuzzauk dialect and pronunciation being difficult to those acquainted only with the Toorkish of Khiva. Ummeer Beeg, however, assisted, being perfectly acquainted with the Toorkish tongue. This guide, whose manner betrayed his eager desire that I should follow his route, assured me, that the snow on the Orenburgh route was nearly melted, and would be entirely gone in a week ; an assertion, which I knew to be utterly false, as six weeks would not suffice to dissolve it. He stated, that there was not the slightest difficulty in passing the 900 miles of desert, to Orenburgh.

I enquired, whether he could himself guide me the entire distance to the Russian camp. The Oozbeg explained the question to him, and a sharp controversy immediately ensued between them, in the heat

of which they forgot that Ummeer Beeg was present, and understood all they said. At the conclusion of the controversy, the Oozbeg gave, as the Kuzzauk's answer, that he could and would conduct me the entire journey. Ummeer Beeg immediately desired to speak to me in private; I cleared the room, and he said—

“For heaven's sake, Sir, do not go with that guide, for the Oozbeg did not give you his real answer, which was, that he could only guide you through his own tribe, where he must make you over to another tribe, which would deliver you to a third, and so on. If you go with that man you are lost. The Khaun Huzurut's protection will avail you nothing, unless the man to whom he delivers you here is held responsible for your safety to your journey's end.”

Upon this subject there could not be two opinions. Moreover, several of those Kuzzauk tribes were in open rebellion against Khiva; all were expecting daily a change of masters, and, of course, the Khaun Huzurut's authority, in such a country, must be held extremely cheap, and might be of little avail, even should the first guide accompany me throughout. This, however, was a risk previously foreseen, and which I was willing to incur. The other was not to be thought of; it was death, without a reasonable chance of success. When, therefore, I saw the Mehtur, I frankly told him what the guide had said, and that I could not, of my free choice, be bandied from guide to guide, and from tribe to tribe. He strove hard to shake my purpose, but in vain.

He had volunteered to pay me a visit before my departure, and arrived, one morning at an early hour, when my only room was being swept, and I was walk-

ing in the space called a garden. My servants were out of the way, and the servants of the house neglected to summon me; so that when, by accident, I passed into the court, I found him sitting there, on his haunches, against the wall, without even a carpet or a nummud; and looking much more like a large watch-dog, than the Prime Minister of the Father of the Conqueror of Heroes. I hastened to him, and made a thousand apologies, and endeavoured, by the most assiduous attention, to make amends for the apparent slight. I suppose he received my apologies at the usual valuation of such ware. He, however, affected to be satisfied; and sundry huge loaves of sugar, some fruit, bread, raisins, and tea, being set before him, our conference commenced.

His object was to persuade me to solicit as a favour permission to travel the direct route to Orenburgh, instead of the route so carefully selected by the Khaun Huzurut himself. But I had taken up my ground after the most careful consideration. I was quite sure, that the alteration of route was the suggestion of an enemy to the mission. Not an answer could be offered to any of my objections to it. He also wished me to ask for the company of an Oozbeg ambassador. I had repeatedly assured him, that if the Khaun Huzurut wished such an one to accompany me I should not object to it; but that I could not recommend it. The Mehtur had come prepared to carry his point with a high hand. But I was firm, and his petulance recoiled upon his own head.

I begged once more to recommend precautions indispensable to the safety of the kingdom, and without which my mission must be unavailing.

“Oh!” he replied, “God will never give us into

the hands of Kawfurs; yet, if our destiny be thus written, no effort of ours can alter or prevent it."

"Believing all this, I wonder you take the trouble to eat and drink. Your destiny being predetermined, you would not die an hour the sooner, should you starve, nor be a whit the worse than is written."

"Yes: but it is my destiny to eat."

"Then pray let it be your destiny to defend the point of approach, which I have pointed out, or, the next page in the volume of your destiny, will be the loss of Khiva."

"Oh," said the Mehtur, fiercely, "if we fall fighting the Kawfurs, we pass straight to paradise."

"And your women? What kind of paradise will your wives and daughters find in the arms of Russian soldiers?"

He was silent.

"You have seen," I continued, "the result of a skirmish with 400 Russians. Are you prepared to meet, face to face, 7,000 with their artillery? If you had rather starve them, than be beaten by them, take the advice of a soldier in this matter."

I perceived, however, that my words were thrown away upon this incapable minister. It was one of the most serious impediments I had to encounter, that my business was to be transacted with one who could neither think himself, nor adopt the ideas of others. Had his noble father, the late minister, been alive, my difficulties had been greatly diminished, and my influence at this Court complete.

## CHAPTER XIV.

Departure of the Persian Ambassador—Difficulty of procuring correct Intelligence—Inefficiency of my Establishment—Presence of the Persian Ambassador, how far useful to me—Alarm occasioned by the Reports of the British Advance—Resolution of the Khaun to put down Slave-dealing—Final Audience—Subject of change of Route renewed—The Guide, Hussun Mhatoor, Chief of the Chowdhours—The Khaun's Charge to him—To me—His Message to Her British Majesty—Importance to Europe at this moment of the Kingdom of Khaurism—Parting Charge and Farewell—Fruitless Endeavours to cash my Bills—Deceit and Treachery of the Mehtur—Inhospitability and Meanness of the Court—Quit Khiva in the almost certain Prospect of perishing in the Wilderness—Parting Instructions, and Farewell to Ummeer Beeg—Departure from Khiva.

THE Persian ambassador had, some days since, departed from Khiva. The Khaun Huzurut had sent him, for his travelling expenses, 900 Tillas of gold (about £540), and, I believe, presents for his master. My information respecting his mission was always imperfect. I was destitute of proper instruments of intrigue. My Secretary, to whom I had made over the Persian department, was far too timid to carry into effect any of my orders to him, to busy himself with the palms and sleeves of the Persian suite. He never even became acquainted with one of them. They lived many miles distant, but he must often have met them in the bazaar, to which the tether of my suite was restricted. My position at Khiva had quite paralysed the faculties of my fol-

lowers ; they were like men of weak heads, surrounded by precipices. Summud Khaun, indeed, with an immense assumption of importance, but infinite caution, raked about amongst the Afghauns, but this race could afford him little useful intelligence, being strangers and without influence, at Khiva. Ali Muhummud, the only one who understood the language of the country, had been fifteen years a slave at Khiva, and had there a wife and child. He was a new servant, and at a Court where a single false step of an inferior agent, may bring ruin upon the mission, where, to seek for intelligence, is a capital crime, I could not venture to employ him in matters of moment. Nizaum, whom I had found the dirtiest of Feraushs (or porters), and who had since become, by the usage of the country, the most slovenly of Nauzirs (or chamberlains), by a singular instance of good fortune, and by the very last means attributable to such a figure, procured me important intelligence, but it reached me late ; and the rest of my people were mere grooms.

It appeared, however, that, at this primitive Court, the easy address, and command of language of the Persian ambassador, were thrown away, and that the Khaun Huzurut complained of his multiplicity of words, and, in speaking of him and of myself, to his Moollas, had given me the preference, as one who said little, and *that* the truth. It was the Khaun's custom, after dismissing me, to send for the Persian, and cross-examine him upon the particulars which I had communicated ; and, as this man had visited Europe, and was an intelligent fellow, and a detected lie might have cost him his life, but certainly the bastinado, his testimony generally corroborated mine,

—a fact of the greatest consequence, because, at that moment, our Governments were at variance, and ourselves were regarded as rivals, at the Court of Khiva. The Persian ambassador, hearing one day, of two very beautiful women for sale in the bazaar, sent and purchased them. The Khaun Huzurut heard of it and was very angry, though on what plea, I know not. He sent, however, to the ambassador's house, and took from him his new purchase.

With the Persian ambassador, on his return to Tehraun, the Khaun Huzurut sent an agent of his own. I was assured that it was only to play the game of words; that the message of the Khaun to the King of Kings was not very flattering,—“Your king offers to rescue my kingdom from a Russian invasion, and in return demands only 30,000 slaves as a gift. Tell Muhummud Shauh that he is yet a child; his beard is not yet grown. Why does he not first drive the Russians out of Persia?” I cannot answer for the truth, or even the probability, of this courteous speech; but, as it had been my care to explain to the Khaun Huzurut the subservience of Persia to Russian counsels, and make known to him the events which had lately marked the history of that kingdom,—its invasion by Russia; the kind offices of Great Britain; its rescue from absolute annihilation, only that, by the weakness of a monarch, who owed his sceptre to the British, it might dwindle into the condition of a province of Russia,—the substance of the message may possibly have been as above, however politely couched.

My private intelligence assured me that our supposed advance to Bulkh had occasioned great alarm; that the Khaun Huzurut vowed that he would put

down slave-dealing throughout his dominions, a resolution easily taken, but practicable only as the result of long years of the most vigorous government.

In the evening of the 3rd March, I was summoned to my final audience. The Khaun asked when I should be ready to start. I replied, "In three days."

"And by which route?"

"The Khaun might ordain as he thought fit; but if allowed a choice, I should prefer that by Mungh Kishlauk. If any other route were determined on, I must positively have a guide, that should accompany me the entire journey to the Russian camp." I related what the Orenburgh guide had been heard to say in my presence.

"I will give you no order," said the Khaun, "but I recommend the Orenburgh route. You will, in attempting the other, be long impeded by the ice." He ran over the reasons already detailed, but they had been often answered; and I replied that, if His Majesty commanded, I would try the other road; but, after many inquiries, was assured that my mission, even should I reach the Russian camp, must be futile by that route; whereas, could I but reach any considerable Russian town, my Government would get intelligence of me, and I could not be detained by excuses and delays.

The Khaun Huzurut sent for the guide, Hussun Mhatoor, chief of the Chowdhoor Toorcumuns, a tribe of 12,000 families, or about 60,000 souls, scattered over the tract between Khiva and Mungh Kishlauk, and all-potent in the latter district. He entered; a tall, hale, handsome old man, who in his youth must have been very robust, and who, even now, betrayed no symptom of the enfeebling influence of years. His



profile was noble, and a perfect model of manly beauty; his head, and long ample beard, were a study; but his deep-set eye was the very charnel light of avarice and treachery. The Khaun desired me to question him as I pleased. His answers fully corroborated my own opinion. "There was no snow on this route; the Caspian in a very few days would be free from ice. There were always plenty of Russian and Nogay boats at Mungh Kishlauk, of all sorts and sizes, waiting off shore for the Bokhara caravans. The present hostilities would in no wise banish them from the port, because there was an island not far off, where they could lie in perfect security until called to the port by signals from the caravans; that they carried cannon, and had therefore nothing to apprehend from the Toorcumuns by daylight: that he himself would give me the use of a boat, to visit, if necessary, the island or the Russian vessels lying off shore; that it was one or at most three days' sail from thence to Astrakhan; that at Mungh Kishlauk were no houses, but an abundance of Kuzzauk and Toorcumun tents, where I could procure everything."

This was for me a triumphant contradiction of all the arguments by which I had been assailed; but in fact it was no evidence; for my liberality to Birdler Beeg, my first guide, having got abroad, every guide was ready to swear his own route the best and most practicable, in the hope of some similar good fortune. The Khaun Huzurut then addressed Hussun Mhatoor.

"You will conduct Abbott Sahib in safety and comfort to Mungh Kishlauk. You will procure him the means of embarking for Astrakhan."

Hussun replied that he had been so active an enemy

of the Russians, that he dared not himself approach any of their vessels, but that he had a boat at my service, and would put me in the way of speaking to the captains of vessels ; that in this I need not apprehend the slightest difficulty."

"And if," said the Khaun to me, "you should not find a passage at Mungh Kishlauk?"

"In that case I must go on to Dahsh Gullah."

"Do so ; and should you reach St. Petersburg, you will let the Queen of England know that I have not sent Her Majesty any rare presents of arms or jewels, because you have represented that Her Majesty is better pleased with the release from slavery of the daughters of the Afghauns."

"I will do so." At the same time I thought that it would have puzzled His Majesty to produce from the royal treasury anything that could be decently offered to a British queen. Emeralds and rubies of every ugly shape, uncut, and not worth the cutting, full of flaws, and set in the most paltry fashion, these may be said to form almost the only ornaments of the wealthy, bearing in these countries an inordinate value, but utterly worthless in the estimation of a London jeweller. A few rare exceptions are known amongst the royal treasures, but these are preserved with most jealous care, and nothing worth keeping is ever bestowed as a gift.

"You are sure," said the Khaun Huzurut, "that the Russians will neither murder nor imprison you?"

"Quite sure!"

"But they imprisoned my ambassador's brother."

"That was at a time, when your Majesty's dominions were far removed from the sight of Europe.

The eyes of the whole world are now turned upon them, and upon my movements, watching both with intense interest."

"Wherefore?"

"Because your Majesty's dominions form the barrier between two of the mightiest Powers of the earth, and are invaded by one of those Powers. Should the other Power awaken to a sense of her danger, the consequence may be, the convulsion of the world."

He replied with a smile, "It's very hard that they cannot find, in all the world, some other battle-field than just my dominions."

He again cautioned me to bear in mind his instructions respecting an exchange of captives; repeating and making me repeat his words. Of his sincerity, there could be no doubt. But as it was inspired by fear, I confess I was not very certain it would endure, after the failure of the Russian expedition, which, in the eyes of a nation so barbarous, would be magnified into a triumph. And I am still of opinion, that had any officer of less genius, prudence, and engaging manners than Captain Shakespear been sent after me to Khiva, the negotiation might have had a different result, from the brilliant conclusion to which his prompt and judicious mediation brought it.

The Khaun Huzurut now dismissed me, commending me to God. I assured him, and it was from my heart, that I would maintain his interests to the utmost of my abilities and my life. I had received from him more favour than he had perhaps ever bestowed upon another. I loved and respected his character; and even had not his interests been

inseparable from those of my country, would have risked much in his service. His after-conduct annihilated every obligation I might have acknowledged to him, and brought me on the creditor's side; but I attribute to circumstances all that was to my disadvantage, and am willing, rather, to dwell upon the undoubted virtues of the sovereign and the man.

The remaining days were spent in the most painful negotiations for procuring funds for my journey. The Mehtur had to the last moment assured me, in answer to my enquiries, that there should be no difficulty in cashing my drafts, at Khiva; he had even sent me a Hindoo Shroff, Diaràm by name, who had readily promised to cash them. At my final audience, therefore, I had not troubled the Khaun Huzurut with the subject, the more especially as ancient custom enjoined the Khaun to frank all my expenses through his dominions, and the Persian ambassador had actually received a large sum on that account; so that to have mentioned my difficulty to the Khaun had been almost equivalent to asking a similar gift. But now Diaràm assured me that he dared not cash my bills, without express authority from the Khaun; and it was manifest that he and other Shroffs had been prohibited from so doing. The Mehtur declined to interfere; and now discovered that I ought, at my last audience, to have asked the Khaun. I was at last obliged to address a letter to the Khaun Huzurut, explaining my predicament, and "begging his furmaun to remove the fear of his displeasure from the minds of the bankers; reminding him that my mission was for the benefit of his empire; and that, should I start without cash on a journey of 2,500 miles, I must perish in the wilderness." I had promised to

march on a certain day, and that day was come. My servants, alarmed at sinister reports, pressed upon me the gold they had saved ; but of course I refused to receive that, which might become as life-blood to them. Birdler Beeg, who had taken my letter to the Khaun Huzurut, returned in confusion, saying that the Khaun had given way to a burst of displeasure on learning its contents, and had asked why I had not mentioned my difficulty at my final audience. I then consulted Hussun Mhatoor as to the possibility of cashing my bills at Mungh Kishlaur, the place of embarkation, on the Caspian, or at Koneh Oorgunj ; but although he said there should be no difficulty, my previous enquiries had assured me that there was no settled habitation there. I wrote a second letter to the Khaun, explaining the reasons which had prevented my troubling him with the subject at my last audience : both his Minister and the Shroff Diaràm being then under promise to supply me. Hussun returned without being able to see the Khaun ; but he left my letter, to which no answer was returned. Summud Khaun, coming in, said that my well-wishers at Khiva entreated me not to delay my departure ; my enemies having taken advantage of my embarrassment to inflame the suspicions of the Khaun Huzurut, and were urging him to destroy myself and suite. Whether this should happen, or he should renounce, at a moment so critical, my services as mediator, I felt it my duty to be gone. I left Khiva, therefore, under the most melancholy auspices. I had just money sufficient to carry me to the shores of the Caspian. There, with the sea on one side and the desert on the other, unless I could get the captain of the Russian vessel

occasionally touching there to take me and my suite aboard, in exchange for my horses, there was a fair prospect of our perishing. I wished, therefore, to leave my whole suite behind; but as I had promised the Khaun Huzurut to write him in Persian on embarking at Mungh Kishlauk, and I could not at that time write a legible Persian letter, the presence of my Mirza was necessary, and my interpreter Ali was indispensable. Alarm had taken possession of the rest, and they dared not be separated from me.

Poor Ummeer Beeg, the released slave, came to bid me farewell. He wept again, as he kissed my hand, but this time it was for me, for the forlorn and hopeless circumstances under which I started on so wild a journey. I had intended to equip and provide him handsomely for his journey, that all might see how *he* is honoured and rewarded who faithfully serves my Government; but my funds were quite exhausted by what I had already given him. I bade him explain my melancholy prospects to the blind prince of H. M. Shah Shoojah's family, whom I had intended to send in honour to Heraut, and also to the unhappy female slaves of the royal family of Heraut, whom I found myself unable to enfranchise. I had begged they might be included in the number whose liberty was granted at my intercession, but my purpose was defeated, either by the Mehtur, or by some feeling of shame on the part of the Khaun, to return to Heraut princesses who had been exposed to such usage in his dominions; and now, for want of funds, I was obliged to leave them in captivity.

A large crowd had collected at my gate, to stare at me. I mounted my horse, and seeing Ummeer Beeg standing near, stretched out my hand to him, which

however he would only raise to his lips and forehead, and then said aloud, and made my interpreter repeat it in Toorkish after me, "This is an honoured servant of the British Government. God preserve you, Ummeer Beeg, good and gallant and faithful follower!"

It was all I could now do to honour him in the eyes of those by whom he had been oppressed and despised.\* Even in that desolate hour, my inability to reward the sufferings and faithful services of this gallant follower was felt as an additional woe.

\* In all that I have written of Ummeer Beeg, the reader is begged to observe that I have written according to my knowledge of him. I am far from supposing that a man so educated should have been free from the almost universal faults of Asiatics. I vouch only for his high spirit, his courage, and his fidelity under trust, virtues found occasionally even amongst outlaws. My attention to him was so blended with sympathy for his sufferings endured in the cause of our Government, that it would have given me great pain to have detected in him any serious blemish; but my acquaintance with him was very slight, and I derived my high opinion of his fidelity and courage from Major Todd, whom he had served in Persia.

## CHAPTER XV.

Departure from Khiva—Palace of the Tooruh—Priggery of the Toorcumuns—Umbarr, an ancient Site—Report of gigantic human Bones—Dahsh Howz—House of the Guide—His Obstinacy—Message from the Mehtur—The great Mare's Nest—Its Origin—Journey resumed—Inhospitability of the Guide—Capture of a Russian Interpreter—Journey resumed—Reception at the Den of Thieves.

OUR road traversed the richly-cultivated and well-wooded valley of the Oxus, amongst the houses of the nobles and gentry of Khiva. The scene is not unpleasing; but the level character of the prospect deprives it of all pretensions to beauty, and, in my present mood of mind, nothing could be more melancholy. The prevalent trees are the poplar, plane, and elm, the latter a fine shadowy mass of tangled boughs and the densest foliage. All the trees at this season were leafless, and there was not a blade of grass, nor a wild flower upon any of the banks, a deficiency for which nothing can atone. Occasionally as we proceeded, the sandy desert, here utterly divested of its sprinkled shrub and herb, jutted into the tract of hard and fertile clay. Villages and small towns appeared at no long intervals; and on the road we occasionally met laden camels, one-horse carts, with their enormous wheels, each freighted with some fair Oozbeg, and driven by a male slave; and



Toorcumun horsemen. Amongst the latter Hussun, the guide, had many acquaintances, on meeting whom he pulled up his horse, throwing his right arm, whip and all, across that portion of the body which mortals call the belly, but which, the sentiment originating the gesture, designates the seat of the affections, as undoubtedly it often is. These were picturesque groups, though somewhat monotonous. Hussun himself, well mounted on a white Toorcumun horse, his body bowed, and his head deep sunk upon his shoulders, was, nevertheless, the pre-eminent figure; his stature, his noble features, and flowing beard of snow, were not to be matched amongst Toorcumuns.

Hussun Mhatoor, in addition to his office of guide, had charge of what was called a train of artillery, being in fact two bundles of fire-arms carried upon a camel; some of these were wall pieces, and the remainder matchlock rifles; they were destined for the defence of an important military post, were regarded with great complacency by him, and with much reverence by all the country.

At night we reached the residence of a Tôrra, or prince of the blood royal. I was ushered into a guest-chamber, something worse than that I had occupied at Khiva, where dinner was provided, and I passed the night. This palace I found precisely similar to other buildings bearing the title in Toorkestaun, *i.e.* externally rather imposing for an Asiatic dwelling, internally a very indifferent kennel.

I had warned Hussun (whose title of Mhatoor, or the Hero, acquired by his prowess over the Russians, I shall generally drop) that I purposed starting at about two o'clock next morning, and that he must be ready at that hour. When, however, I rose, he was

not forthcoming, and, on being summoned, sent to excuse himself. This was the first specimen of his insolence, but not the last. I started without him, and, of course, soon lost the road, which I recovered only by means of a Toorcumun, who was persuaded to accompany me. The country was precisely similar to that of the preceding day, excepting that the houses were generally smaller, and canals and sluices in abundance intersect the plain.

Summud Khaun, the steward, who had fallen into the rear, overtook me about midway, complaining that one of Hussun's relations, a Toorcumun, had stolen two of the cloaks of my suite. That he had discovered the fact, taxed him with it, and, upon his denial, had opened his bundle, and drawn out the missing articles in presence of many witnesses. This was an ominous commencement. The man was known, afterwards, by the name of Doozd, or the thief.

In passing over the abandoned site of the town Unbarr, walled around, as if to be re-occupied, I inquired of my interpreter, Ali Muhummud, the history. He said, it was supposed to have been the capital of Khaurism, under the Culmauks, whom we call Calmucks. That these were slain in an invasion by Russia. That the late Khaun purposed rebuilding this city, and had walled it accordingly; but that, in digging, some monstrous human bones were found, which proved it to have been a cemetery of giants. That the Khaun had, on this account, prohibited any profanation of the spot, by the erection of fresh buildings. That the Toorcumuns, nevertheless, resorted thither, to carry off the soil, which formed an excellent manure. That many of

these gigantic bones were turned up. That he had seen many. That they were decidedly human: he could not be mistaken, because he had seen the skulls and the teeth. That the former were of such size, as barely to admit of being embraced by his arms. That after a few days' exposure in the air, they fell to powder.

The last circumstance is the only one that gives an air of probability to the assertion, that these bones are human. Had they been fossil, they might have been confidently pronounced to belong to the brute creation; but it is difficult to imagine the preservation, in an osseous form, of animal remains from the remote period\* when the Oxus could have been the resort of any of the larger varieties of mammalia. I recommend the subject to any who may succeed me.

At noon, we passed through Dahsh Howz (the stone cistern), a town, near which is a royal garden, and a mud fort of some size, of rectangular form, with curtains and round bastions, in a double row of defence. It is new, yet has already suffered from the weather. About three miles further, we reached the abode of Hussun Mhatoor, an ordinary farmhouse, standing unsheltered in the cultivated plain. Here there was much show of hospitality. A guest chamber was allotted me near the entrance, and my people were accommodated in another. Hussun soon informed me, that it would be necessary to halt here three days. I was now completely in this man's power, being cut off from all communication with Khiva. I argued, insisted, commanded, explained

\* I have, however, since found large quantities of the bone of the elephant, in an osseous form, in the soil immediately north of the village of Russool, on the left bank of the Jelum.

the extreme importance of my mission, the inevitable ruin to his country should it fail, as it must, if delayed, and the consequent ruin to himself, from the anger of the Khaun Huzurut ; but my words were all thrown away upon this man, whose temper is as obdurate as his heart. He heard me with the greatest composure, and then quietly repeated his determination to remain. Hussun was aware of the state of my purse, and how little he had to expect from my liberality ; and as to a note for cash upon Heraut, the idea was incomprehensible to this son of the wilderness, to whose speculations had never occurred the idea, that a shred of paper could be exchanged for gold, or that anything but fear could prevent the breach of a promise involving loss. My funds, indeed, were so low, that I could not even venture to promise him part of my property, horses, arms, or accoutrements ; as they must soon form my sole means of purchasing my onward way.

Again, and again, I sent for Hussun, to expostulate with him, and at length solemnly assured him, that unless he obeyed the Khaun's orders, to conduct me with all speed to Mungh Kishlaurk, I should quit his house, and return to Khiva, for another guide. This step I was extremely reluctant to adopt, because the news of my return would certainly reach the Khaun, through one of Hussun's emissaries, who would attribute it to my perverseness, and probably, in the present state of the Khaun's mind, induce some rash act, which would interrupt all harmony between the Governments ; when, therefore, Hussun reduced his demand to a single day, I felt it prudent to consent, rather than resort to the alternative.

10th March, 1840.—The arrival of a messenger

from the Minister of Khiva was announced by my people, with many smiles. He produced a letter, and 100 ducats in silver; I had applied for 800. The letter stated, that these were all that could be collected in the capital of Khaurism, and that, being the property of a banker, interest was required by the owner for his risk. The excessive meanness of this transaction was a severe reflection upon me, for having treated this Court, as if either King or Minister could comprehend, far less appreciate, liberality and disinterestedness. In justice to myself, and the cause in which I was embarked, I should have wrung out of it every possible advantage, and have risked the least possible in return.

I sat down and wrote an order on Heraut for the sum, with interest, and in answer to the Minister's letter, represented that he had sent me just one-eighth of the sum I had required of him. That I hoped he would be able to procure and send me at least four or five hundred more ducats, upon the same terms.

My servants had been to me the night before, and had again pressed affectionately upon me their savings, amounting together, to a sum considerable enough, under my present circumstances. But I replied, that the cause in which I was embarked was that of my own, and not of *their* country; that my country could require, and was welcome to *my* life, but not to theirs; and that I begged they would never again mention the subject. By the most rigid economy, I might now, I thought, reach the Russian frontier, and it seemed probable, that some of the Russian sea-captains at Mungh Kishlauk might take my horses and arms in part payment of my passage

to Astrakhan, and, at Astrakhan, there was just a possibility that I might meet with some Afghaun or Jew merchant to cash my bills upon Heraut.

Hussun, who had been all smiles, since the arrival of the silver, let me know that a fine horse was at the gate, awaiting my acceptance. I replied, that it was impossible for a British agent to accept gifts unless he could make a suitable return, which he well knew, was not my case ; so, after much remonstrance, the horse was commuted for a sheep and a cloak, in acknowledgment of which I made his young son a handsome present of cash, and gave him a dress of honour.

The sleet had been falling all day, and, at night, lay upon the earth to the depth of ten inches. It still darkened the air, forming a gloomy and suitable preparation for the tale with which Ali Muhummud had alarmed my servants, and which, when night was well set in, the old Meerza brought for my edification and comfort.

"Salaam alikoom," said the old gentleman, entering.

"Alikoom salaam ; take a seat."

He sat down, and spread his hands over the heap of ignited charcoal before me.

"Have you heard, Sir, anything regarding our guide, Hussun Mhatoor ?"

"Only that he is chief of the Chawdhoor Toorcumuns."

"He is a great villain, everyone says so, and the greatest thief in the country, and all his people are thieves. You had a specimen this morning of a Chowdhoor's honesty."

"The greatest thief, in a country of thieves, is the only safe companion for a traveller."

"But Hussun is the most avaricious wretch in the world."

"I and my suite have not much to tempt avarice; he well knows how low my funds are."

"Ah! but your horses, Sir, your arms and clothes."

"Fear nothing. The Khaun knows the importance of my mission, and Hussun leaves his family as pledges of my safety."

"Have you heard, Sir, Ali Muhummud's tale?" in an indifferent tone of voice, and rubbing his hands over the fire, as if his whole attention were absorbed in them.

"No! what saith Ali?"

"Ali has a friend in the minister's service. This friend was bent upon accompanying Ali in your suite; but, the day we started, he came to tell Ali that he could not go."

"Well, what does his going or staying signify to me?"

"You have not heard his reason yet, Sir." Here the old gentleman rose, and, cautiously opening the door, peeped out, to assure himself there were no eaves-droppers. He then closed the door, resumed his seat, and proceeded.

"He not only excused himself from going, but urged Ali, in the strongest terms, not to think of it."

"Well! well! what is all this to the purpose? I suppose he had some silly tale of massacre to tell, and I have not the slightest doubt that Ali was ass enough to believe every word of it."

“He said,” replied the Meerza, in a mysteriously low voice, “that he had overheard the minister say you had been discovered to be a Russian : that three fresh men had just identified you as such, on oath, before the Khaun Huzurut. That the Khaun feared to slay *you*, as he had slain the other Englishmen, in his capital, on account of the advance of your army to Bulkh, and had therefore sent you to be murdered in the wilderness.\* That the Khaun was now fully satisfied that the interests of England and Russia were one and the same.”

I laughed heartily at this tale, and sent for Ali, who repeated it.

“Do *you* yourself believe it?” I enquired.

“I do!”

“Then you are a great fool to accompany me. What did you reply to your friend?”

“I said, that my blood was not redder than my master’s; that he had redeemed my child from slavery, and that I would not desert him at a pinch.”

This child was redeemed at the Government expense, as Ali well knew; but he knew that I was a servant of Government, and that, in serving me, he served my country.

“Would you like,” said my Meerza, “to see the young Afghaun Syud? he can tell you something more?”

“Another mare’s nest (Ashiāneh-i-Madiān). Yes! let him bring it in.”

He entered, and asserted that the belief in Khiva

\* Strange as it may seem, Col. Arthur Conolly, who succeeded me at Khiva, gave full credit to this tale of treachery, and endeavoured to persuade his Government of it. I, of course, fully refuted it.



was general, that the Khaun Huzurut, fearing to murder me in his capital, had sent me into the wilderness to be destroyed.

This report was so easily accounted for, that it gave me very little uneasiness, although it sharpened my attention to the most trifling incidents in the conduct of those around me. Let it be remembered, that the only persons supposed to be English, that had ever visited Khiva, had been put to the torture at night, by the reigning Khaun, murdered under the cloak of darkness, and buried in the desert, under the same circumstances of mystery. People spoke of the thing only in whispers, and with extreme caution. These men, calling themselves English, and murdered as Russians, had, by their fate, confused together the two nations in the minds of the Khivians; and, as it was well known that many had identified me as a Russian, and as Russia was actually invading the country, and the British arms were supposed to have advanced to Bulkh, for the purpose (many believed) of concerting with Russia the extermination of Islaum; and, as the nature of my mission, and the explication of our policy, were strictly confined to the precincts of the Court; it was scarcely possible that the people of Khiva should form any other judgment of my destination than that which alarmed my followers. As for the man who had heard the minister say this, or that, he was probably a tool of Yar Muhummud Khaun, who had agents at Khiva, and was bent upon defeating, by every possible means, an alliance which would close against him this door of retreat, should his perfidy at length exhaust the patience of the British Government. To him I have little hesitation in attributing also the

host of tidings tending to alarm the Khaun Huzurut, which at this moment poured in like a flood upon us; the messenger that had seen the Persian Gulf covered with our fleets; the other, who had seen our armies at Bulkh; and the third, who had been in the Rozeh Bagh (garden of fast), at Heraut, when a British force was encamped there. All these men were Afghauns. The endeavour to prevail upon Ali Muhummud to desert me, at this critical moment, was a master-piece of strategy, because, without him (the only one of the party who could speak Toorkish), my ruin was inevitable. That the Vuzeer kept up a constant intercourse with the minister of Khiva, I was aware: and, although I had trumped his best card, in dismissing his agent, Peer Muhummud Khaun, I knew the man well enough to be certain that his design would not be abandoned; whilst his personal enmity to myself would be inflamed.

On the other hand, my secret intelligence seemed quite worthy of dependence. It could not be a forgery of the Court of Khiva, because its tendency was to defeat the wishes of that Court. It could scarcely be attributed to Yar Muhummud Khaun, because the agent was the least likely person in the world to be applied to by me, or anyone else, for information, and had not offered it voluntarily, but yielded it to the power of gold. Moreover, this intelligence tallied perfectly with my observation of the Court intrigues, and rendered the whole system intelligible; whereas the report just mentioned was at variance with a variety of important particulars, and tended only to confuse. None of my servants, excepting Ali and the old Meerza (who had the heart of a hare), thoroughly gave way to these base suspicions of the

Khaun Huzurut. Ali Muhummud, unfortunately, owing to his long residence at Khiva, was a formidable authority to them; and being himself fully impressed with the sense of a peril which had paid him the compliment of addressing itself first to him, contrived, every now and then, to win the others to his views, and ended by himself abandoning them *in toto*.

I was aware that the Khaun's suspicions of me had lately gained great strength, and now perceived the cause. I knew, also, that the minister would do me as much mischief as he dared. I think it possible, that these reports may have encouraged the treachery afterwards practised, and that the perpetrators may have been assured of the minister's good offices to screen them from the consequences. But, be this as it may, no one will wonder, that the good people of Khiva, having at my departure the persuasion referred to, and seeing their anticipations fulfilled to the letter, should still attribute the villainy to him from whom they had expected it. The reader, after what has been detailed of the meanness and inhospitality of my treatment, will scarcely suspect me of any undue bias in favour of the Khaun.

March 11th.—Resumed the journey through deep snow, and a mist, hurried by the east wind back to its source, the Caspian; the vapour, in the process of congelation, had given out sufficient heat to temper the otherwise cutting wind. The road was well occupied by horsemen, amongst whom Hussun had many acquaintances. Two summits of inconsiderable height, rising from the right bank of the Oxus, were in view, but we did not approach within sight of that river. These hills are said to have yielded gold in former

days. At about two o'clock, we halted at a Toorcumun village, where a tent was pitched for my reception.

Here Hussun again demanded three days' halt to procure camels, all of which might, under proper arrangements, have been waiting in readiness for me. My remonstrances were renewed, but with less effect than ever, for we had receded from Khiva, where alone could be found any counterpoise to the formidable power of this chief. He, moreover, insisted upon my laying in fifty days' supply of provisions for man and beast, and positively refused to stir with less, although there remained before us but fourteen days' journey. For this supply ten camels were requisite, which were to be hired of his relations. Exhausted as were my funds, I did not readily submit to this fresh imposition. The point was debated with much warmth through my interpreter. Nothing, however, could move Hussun from his purpose. Accustomed from youth to almost kingly authority, obedience was an art he could not comprehend, and to have separated from him had been destruction. Low as were my funds, my principal objection to lay in so large a supply of provisions was the plea it would afford him of lengthening out a journey upon which he lived at free quarters.

March 12th.—I completed to-day my thirty-third year, and the date will long be remembered for the bitter disappointment I am experiencing: cramped, and all but strangled under the burthen of this "old man of the sea." Loitering, to suit the ease of a subject of Khaurism, whilst speed alone could save that kingdom from destruction. Even the ruin which everywhere stared myself in the face was for-

gotten in consideration of the wide-sweeping mischief to others which this delay seemed to render inevitable. Five days were past, and we had advanced but one day's journey and a half on the road, and it was evident, from the supply of provisions demanded, that the guide intended to move very deliberately the remainder of the journey, instead of conveying me, as he had promised, to Mungh Kishlauk in sixteen days. The weather meanwhile was becoming milder. The army of invasion would soon be at liberty to advance, and should it reach Khiva ere I could reach St. Petersburg, all was lost.\*

March 13th.—Still halting for the amusement of Hussun. News has arrived from the Russian frontier, that a fleet of seven boats, carrying supplies for the Russian fort, Dahsh Gullah, has been stranded on the ice, and burnt by the Toorcumuns, and Kuzzauks of Mungh Kishlauk. That a Russian officer also, who had visited the coast to purchase sheep, &c., of the Kuzzauks, had been seized, and was within a march of this spot, in custody of his captors, to be delivered to the Khaun Huzurut at Khiva. This may probably deter other vessels from approaching the coast, and thus create fresh difficulty in the way of an enterprise, already sufficiently arduous.

The Toorcumuns of this village are rude and noisy. It is difficult to escape their constant intrusion, especially, as the customs of the country impute inhospitality to him, who closes his door. My followers are pestered by them, and we find it difficult to provide food sufficient for any meal, since we never can

\* From what I have since learned I believe that Hussun lingered in expectation of an order from the Khaun Huzurut for my murder, which was generally expected at Khiva.

conjecture, how many guests there may not be. They laugh boisterously and constantly, a habit common to Toorcumuns, proceeding from a certain coarse good nature, high spirits, a sound constitution, and a superlative opinion of self.

March 14th.—With the utmost difficulty, I have this day persuaded Hussun to resume the march. The road still skirts the clay valley of the Oxus, but the houses here are fewer, the tents in greater proportion, and the land newly cleared. The black tent is so much more comfortable, than any permanent habitation known in Central Asia, that the Toorcumun abandons it with reluctance, and only when he has become, thoroughly and exclusively, an agriculturist. For many Toorcumuns, who have taken to the latter avocation, retain their love for the wilderness and its comparative freedom; and continue to resort thither, yearly, to pasture their flocks and herds, which, at other seasons, are watched, there, by their children or retainers.

We approached, shortly after noon, a considerable Khail of Chowdhoor Toorcumuns, and our friend the Thief, handsomely mounted, rode forth to escort me to the tent of his elder brother, the Yuze Baushie, Kooch Muhummud. I was shown into a beautiful black tent, of the largest size and handsomest material, forming the most agreeable dwelling imaginable. The women of the house had collected to gaze. They are fair, with high complexions, and irregular features; certainly not ill-looking; but seldom, I imagine, beautiful, when their blood is unmixed. As the Thief had here four brothers, the place has since been known amongst my people, as the Den of Robbers.

## CHAPTER XVI.

Visits from Toorcumuns—Khail of Yahmoots—Dress of Toorcumun Women—Fierceness of the Watch-Dogs—Visit to the Ruins of Old Oorgunj, and to a Toorcumun Fair—Entertainment at a Khail—Cure of Jaundice—Toorcumun Dinner—Economy of a Toorcumun Tent—Dress of Children—Ruined Fort Shoomauki—Deserted Bed of Oxus—Distant View of Oxus and the Lake Loudahn—Slaves—Cliffs of Chalk and Marl—Ruined Castle of Kohna Wuzeer—Of Barrasun Gelmus—Another Enchanted Castle—Ibrahim Aat'h—Entrance to Kuzzauk Land—Distant View of the Channel occupied by the Oxus when it fell into the Gulf of Balkaun—Anecdotes of the Bahrukzye Chiefs.

THE chief men of the Khail paid me a visit, and were treated to tea; and afterwards, the elder brother, Kooch Muhummud, a broad-shouldered, deep-chested, bull-necked, and bandy-legged Toorcumun, with coarse, good-natured features, rather an honest, trumpiform, red nose, and the voice of a bear; led in his young daughter, a child of some eight or nine years, and seated himself, at my invitation, near me. The little girl wore a scarlet hemispherical cap, with silver tassels and bells over her light brown hair, which was braided in four tails. Her introduction was regarded by my old Meerza with holy horror; and Summud Khaun afterwards gave me a sermon, upon the same text, from which I learned, that a father should not see his daughter, after the age of eight or nine years. As for me, I was delighted at

this symptom of escape, from the brutifying and hateful habits and prejudices of the Muhammedan world.

Four slaves afterwards entered, to pay their respects. One of them, a Tymunee of Heraut, had sold *himself* to escape starvation. The number of captives in Khaurism is supposed to exceed the Oozbeg population of 700,000.

March 15th.—Resumed my journey through a plain, less highly cultivated, and less densely inhabited, but cleared of jungle, and sprinkled with black tents. A march of twenty-four miles, in the teeth of a storm of sleet, which the loose dress of the country is ill-calculated to resist, brought me to a small arm of the Oxus, having water about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet deep. Koneh (*i.e.* old) Oorgunj had been sometime visible, but was still five miles distant, and nothing could persuade the old sulky guide to advance a step further, until the arrival of the camels. We therefore sat an hour in the snow-storm, and then proceeded farther down the stream, to a Khail of Yahmoot Toorcumuns. Here the relations of my old guide, Birdler Beeg, welcomed me warmly—a couple of black tents were emptied for my accommodation, and speedily filled with heads and faces, in all moods and tenses of curiosity. A large wood fire was lighted in the centre of my tent, and half the covering of the sky-light was removed; and I found the change to these snug quarters, from the cutting wind outside, extremely grateful. Here I saw many Toorcumun women, engaged in various occupations about the camp; one of them appeared beautiful, the generality, comely, decidedly European; and often with features almost English. The eyes, indeed, though sparkling,



are small, and the lids are ill cut, the arch above being precisely similar to that below. The complexion, even when the hair is light, cannot be termed blonde, because the white of the skin (so to speak) is a transparent sunny hue, such as we see upon a ripe nectarine, or an evening cloud. Their colour is rich. The hair is plaited in two tresses, which fall down either cheek. The head-dress is a high caftan, nearly similar to that worn by male Ghubbres,\* but of gaudy colours, usually crimson; a scarf, tied around this, falls behind, fluttering in the breeze. The dress is a pair of very ample coloured drawers, and a chogah, or cloak, of striped chintz or silk. The dress of young maidens is a low, cylindric cap of coloured silk, and a chogah, or cloak, of the most gaudy and varied colours. They seem clad in the wings of butterflies. This dress is singularly becoming, and seems to confer upon them a fay-like kindred with the wild creatures, and wilder fancies, proper to the desert. Many female faces came to peep through the crevices of the tent; and I hoped that some of the children, at least, would be permitted to enter. Our camels arrived at a late hour.

One of the inconveniences of lodging in these camps arises from the ferocity of the large watch-dogs. At our third stage, one of these lamed my Yahmootie horse by a bite on the haunch; and my Heraut horse narrowly escaped the same fate to-day. I left the camp to saunter toward the river; but, being warned by past experience, had my sabre under my arm. It was well that I had adopted this precaution;—almost before I could draw to defend myself, six fierce dogs were upon me. By the wildest capers and flourishes,

\* Fire-worshippers.

which I cannot remember without mirth, I contrived to keep them at weapon's length; but had not a half-a-dozen Toorcumuns seen my predicament, and run to my assistance, should have been much torn, although I might have immolated two or three of the curs. This were a very unsatisfactory way of receiving inglorious and unpensioned wounds.

March 15th.—Although I am indebted to the people of these Khails for shelter alone, having a store of my own supplies, it is distressing to me to have no means of acknowledging their hospitality, especially as a surpassing notion of English wealth and liberality prevails. Ere I quitted the tent, the youngest child, a little girl, was brought in to see me. She sat awhile upon my knee, but toddled off the instant I had given her a piece of sugar. I beckoned to four others, all little girls, and greatly delighted them with the loaf sugar, which is a rarity, although evidently not unknown. I now said, "Khoosh Ullah Yar" (farewell), and started, with two Toorcumuns, for the ruins of ancient Oorgunj; it is situated on the right bank of a river channel, said to have once held the main stream of the Oxus, and still communicating with it. The extent of this city was, perhaps, one mile by half a mile, with extensive suburbs on the north. At the east angle is the citadel, a brick fort of square figure, flanked by eight circular and projecting bastions. The site of this fort is artificially elevated about ten feet, and was girdled by a ditch; but the whole is now a ruin, as is the ancient city: the walls of the latter, which were probably of unbaked brick, having subsided into mere mounds. On the north of the site (I speak at hazard), stands a brick column, erected by Chengis Khaun; it is the

frustrum of an extremely taper cone, surmounted by a cylinder, and is very sufficiently ugly; it has no base, and its sole ornaments have been zones of bricks, of alternating patterns. The frustrum continues erect, notwithstanding the mouldering of its base; but the summit is shattered, and has suffered a very obvious declension from perpendicularity by the violence of the north-east wind: close at hand, is the tomb of Huzurut Sheikh Shurreef, a very holy gentleman. It is a singular edifice, having a conical roof of coloured tiles, supported upon a prism of twenty-four sides, not inelegantly moulded into columns and recesses; the base is a square building, with door of pointed arch. It was far too holy for my unsaintly feet, as my people ascertained from the Toorcumuns, so I did not attempt to enter. Farther on I found another tomb, having the remains of a conical roof, which had surmounted and enclosed a vaulted dome. This building was once lined with glazed and coloured tiles, but only the roof retains them; it is elegantly constructed, but the tiles are coarse. It is said to have been built by a lady of the family of Chenghis Khaun, to the memory of her lover. These, love and death, are restricted to no clime, to no age of the world, and to no state of society; we find their record everywhere. They are the two great powers that influence the destiny of man, the one inspiring his thirst for, the other setting seal to, his immortality. The lady's tomb stands side by side with her lover's.

I had now seen all the curiosities of this deserted site, but, being still desirous to view a Toorkish market, rode on to the present inhabited site, which must not be confounded with new Oorgunj, a flourishing city on the banks of the Oxus. This is a mere village,

about one and a half miles north of the ruins. I met here a party, headed by a venerable and well-dressed man, who saluted me. He begged me to accompany him to the governor's palace, which I did. There I received much civility, and a pressing invitation to put up at the palace, which I declined. The bazaar afforded but a poor spectacle, consisting of a few huts and a throng of Toorcumuns and Kuzzauks. Some Kuzzauk girls were of the number; they rode astraddle, unveiled, and without attendants: they are European in feature and complexion, but coarse and ugly specimens. Finally I found my tent pitched near a Khail, on the road to Mungh Kishlauk.

March 16th.—At 8 o'clock A.M. I started again, and the camels at noon being considerably in the rear, we halted at a Khail on the roadside, to allow them to join. Here I was consulted as a physician upon the remedies proper for the jaundice, with which the Khet Khoda was afflicted. After prescribing such attention to diet and exercise as I thought might benefit him in a country destitute of medicine, I found my advice fairly nonplussed by that of my Meerza, who knew a certain and very pleasant cure. "Jaundice," said he, with all the gravity of a father of the faculty, "proceeds from the heat of the blood. Now the fish is a cold-blooded, flabby animal, and lives in a cold element; therefore, it is an antidote to jaundice." I was rather angry with the old fellow, because as he wore a turban, a head-dress in these countries confined to learned and holy men, and I had but a Tartar cap of Cashmere shawl, his advice will certainly carry the day, and the poor yellow Khet Khoda will eat cold-blooded fish daily, without the slightest attention to necessary precautions. I was farther annoyed by

hearing my interpreter Ali explaining to the roomful of Toorcumuns, in very good Toorkish, which he supposed unintelligible to me, the end, object, and nature of my mission.

Bread and trenchers of mutton-broth, having huge wooden ladles were now placed before us. The ladles were passed from mouth to mouth, the tongue being the only napkin ever found in Toorkestaun. The bread was plunged into the broth, and kneaded about by the filthy hands of the company in a truly horrible manner. Then a dripping handful was scooped up in the hand, and crammed into the mouth, which was held over the dish, that nothing might be lost, for there are no beards here to profit by the overflow. I had thought the Afghaun dinner sufficiently revolting, and the system of Khiva is some degrees worse; but the Toorcumun surpasses either, and I had yet to see the Kuzzauk.

We remounted, and proceeded on our journey, reaching at evening a Khail, of two or three tents, in a hollow; a tent was vacated for my use, and I was soon surrounded by a crowd of rude figures, who assailed me with numberless questions in Toorkish. I was not long in discovering the burthen of the chorus to be, "Give us some silver; give us some gold." But, as the state of my funds made it extremely inconvenient for me to understand so much Toorkish, I replied in long-winded stanzas of Persian, at which they all shook their heads, and exclaimed, "Wonderful!" One man, to back his request, produced his testimonials, not, as in England, a broken leg, an armless sleeve, or an extinct eye, but a rosary of large black beads, the symbol of a fuqueer. "Are they for me?" I asked innocently, making my meaning obvious

by my gesture. The fellow could not help laughing, and there was as much mirth as disappointment at my stupidity. Two sweet little girls had long been peeping in at the door; one of them a pretty brunette, was encouraged to approach, and sit upon my knee. The other, a *bona fide* blonde, was more shy, and regarded me with wonder and fear.

To my surprise, the men now left the tent, and the mistress of the family, a woman of forty, entered and commenced preparations for the evening meal. An iron tripod was placed astraddle of the fire, which is always burning in the centre of the tent, and a huge hemispherical cauldron of cast iron, the work of Russia, was placed upon it. Then, with a clumsy wooden ladle, the good dame scooped from another cauldron, in which stood a high mass of snow, the subsided water, and transferred it to the cauldron on the fire. She then proceeded to knead some dough.

Four young kids were tied in a corner, listening and bleating by turns for their dams. A sudden scuffle took place at the door, and in rushed two milch goats; and in spite of all opposition, forced their way to the spot where they were usually fed. One of my little play-fellows brought a dish of food for each of the goats; and whilst they were eating, I heard another scuffle, and in came a pretty little girl of twelve years, evidently in trepidation, at the step she had taken. She seized two of the kids, and carried them out in her arms, never lifting her eyes. All this while, I sat delighted. But my feeling can be appreciated only by those, who have been, like myself, seventeen years in a land, from which the companionship of woman is banished. I played with the children, and took lessons in Toorkish from the dame;

I soon found, however, that avarice, the universal demon of Asia, has dominion even in the female breast. Every time I caressed or noticed the children, the good dame enjoined me to make them a present, either of money or dress. I took care to answer all her demands in the unknown tongue, and we had much laughter, at our cross purposes. An unwelcome intruder now entered, my old Meerza. He came to say that my tent was ready. I had made up my mind to pass the night here, after the Toorcumun fashion, and objected to so many of my servants intruding upon the family, who had evidently no design of vacating this tent. It was far better, I thought, that they should occupy mine. But the old wretch had set his heart upon enjoying the blazing fire, and had a thousand arguments at hand. My tent was ready. All my goods and chattels had been arranged in it. Hussun Mhatoor had made the arrangement; and, in short, had I persisted, I might have been suspected of some ungenerous and inhospitable motive, so I yielded with a good grace. I had, however, the satisfaction to see the old Meerza served according to his deserts; for, no sooner had I left the tent, than the owner bundled him out without ceremony, and he passed the night under the freezing heavens. I was vexed at his officiousness, by which I lost a rare opportunity of studying the manners of Toorcumuns. But the fact is, that curiosity of this kind is so utterly incomprehensible to an Asiatic, that great caution is necessary in its indulgence.

Early next morning, I spied my two little play-fellows half venturing towards my tent, then running back, laughing to their own, where their elder sister, the little maiden of twelve years, was encouraging

them to persist, with many a nod and smile. She wore a close cloak or dress of chintz, of gay and fantastic, but becoming colours. On her head was a close cap of red cloth, fringed with black lambskin. Eight plaited tresses of brown, silky hair, fell from beneath this. Her face was too full for beauty: but she had a rich colour, sparkling black eyes, and pearly teeth. The two little things now peeped shyly into my tent; I caught them, and after inflicting sundry kisses, which they endured with all bashfulness, sent them back, each with a silver coin in her tiny hand. The elder sister was delighted, she ran in and brought the infant, whom she sat astraddle of the blonde's back, and sent in this cavalier fashion, to my tent.

I now took my position outside, but still perceived the little maiden peeping at me, from her tent door. The blonde, after much coaxing, took her seat at my side, and I was content. The cap, this little puss wore, was similar to those so often described, a close shell of red cloth, trimmed with black lamb's wool, worked with black silk braid, and tricked with small silver bells. From the borders of the cap, long tassels of black silk fell down on either side, mingling with her plaited tresses of light brown hair. This head-dress is so becoming to children, that one is often disappointed on nearer approach to features, that, at a little distance, had seemed so lovely beneath it.

March 17th.—Mounted and pursued my journey. To my extreme disgust, the obstinate old guide pulled up at the distance of twelve miles, and neither arguments nor threats could persuade him to progress. We, therefore, camped at a small Khail, close to the



ruined fort Shoomaukie, deserted since the Oxus found its passage northward, and forsook the Caspian. Shoomaukie is upon the high bank of one of the river channels; up to this spot, the whole plain, which is the valley of the Oxus, has been richly cultivated in former days, and is now much neglected.

18th.—Resumed march down the abandoned channel for about six miles, when, on climbing the high bank, or rather hills, left by the sinking of the river valley, a wide expanse of water burst upon my eye, which I concluded was the sea of Aral; my delight was very great. The Oxus was visible upon the horizon, pouring its waters into this lake, of which the N.W. coast was formed of high cliffs and the southern portion of the river valley. To the east only, water was visible; I was, however, mistaken in my conjecture, for this is only the lake Lowdahn, which receives an arm of the Oxus.

Striking across the high ground, we, after a mile, again descended some cliffs, which wall in another valley in a singular manner. The cliff is of alternate strata of chalk and marl, the latter preponderating. The high ground, over which we had passed, was stony. The bottom of this valley was clay or marl, covered with a jungle of bushes. Towards evening we put up at a Khail of three black tents.

On this march a little boy of Heraut, who is being carried by the Toorcumuns for sale to the Kuzzauks, attracted my attention. He is a beautiful child, of about seven years, with the regularly handsome features and large full eyes of the Herauties. He is full of spirit, and, in short, as fine a child as can be imagined. My people make much of him, I am deeply interested in his fate, and determined, that so soon as

we reach Mungh Kishlaur, I will offer any horses and arms that cannot be sold for his freedom. A girl of about eleven years is another of the slaves. She is a Tymunnee.

March 19th.—Crossing this basin, in a direction nearly west, we reached, at a distance of ten miles, a cliff containing two artificial caverns, that have evidently been formed as habitations. Near them are some Kuzzauk tombs, formed of a circular palisade of thorny bushes, firmly fixed in the earth and bound around by withes. On the summit of this cliff, is the tomb of a man named Ibrahim, and the place is called Ibrahim Aat'h. We soon afterwards ascended from this basin, to the height of about three hundred feet, and camped at the summit of the cliffs walling in the valley. These cliffs are of strata of chalk and marl, surmounted by a stratum of shell limestone, containing very perfect petrifications of the cockle, mussel, and spirorbis. The substance of this stone is hard and brittle. It rings like porcelain, and separates into broad laminae. It seems, generally, the uppermost stratum, but sometimes is covered with clay. It is almost entirely composed of the three shells above named, and I have never found any others in it, although I have examined a thousand specimens.

From this height, at the distance of twenty miles, on an Azimuth of  $108^{\circ}$ , I saw the ruined castle Kohna Wuzeer, occupying an elevation in the midst of the wide valley, and isolated by steep and lofty precipices. It was built by demons in the reign of Adil Khaun; but more of its history I could not learn. Enchanted castles abound in these parts. About forty miles north of Shoomaukie, is one called

in Toorkish, Burrasun Gelmus,\* or "the castle from which there is no return." The ruins are girdled by a ditch full of quicksands, and exhaling vapour and flame. The gate is guarded by two mighty dragons, who have never been known to sleep; many have, in olden times, attempted to explore these ruins, in search of the rich treasure deposited in their vaults—many have entered its precincts, but none have ever returned. Its mysteries are as inviolate as the secrets of the tomb. Of late years, the attempt has been abandoned: men do not account themselves (at least not in eastern lands) wiser, or more valiant, or more holy than their fathers.

Another castle exists in these parts, but its name I could not learn, filled with treasure beyond price, and guarded by enchantment. Madreheem Khaun, the late king, sent, seventeen years ago, a party of pioneers to explore the ruins. These had the courage to venture as far as the ditch of the fortress, when a venerable man, evidently a saint, from his snowy robes and flowing white beard, appeared upon the battlements, and exclaimed in a marrow-curdling voice, which, nevertheless, was mild and gentle, "Return, my children, return. This adventure is not for you; the season for it is not at hand. It is reserved for a man, yclept Muhummud, who is even now an infant, hanging from the breast. He shall come, in the year of the Hijjera, 1274 (or A.D. 1880), and shall prosper."

March 20th.—We pursued our route over high land, dappled with half-melted snow. The marl

\* The site of this enchanted castle appears to be the island in the midst of the sea of Aral. Ali could not give me any particular clue to the position of either of these ruins.

soil, saturated with snow water, yielded beneath our horses' feet, giving them much toil. This is our first march in the Kuzzauk country, of which the boundary is at Ibrahim Aat'h ; and Ibrahim Aat'h lies in a line, irregularly drawn from the southwestern angle of the sea of Aral, west by south, to the Caspian. All, north of this line, is Kuzzauk land. Nevertheless, in the district of Mung'h Kishlauk, and in some other parts, Chowdhoor Toorcumuns feed their flocks and herds ; and upon the borders of the sea of Aral, are found some families of Kahra Kulpauk Oozbegs. At a shallow basin of snow water, at the summit of the ascent, I saw large flocks of the antelope or sheep (it is neither) of this steppe. We then descended, and encamped on lower ground, though still considerably elevated above the valley. Hence I perceived, gleaming in the distance, about twelve miles south by west, the wide, deep channel of the Oxus, filled with snow water, and tending in a direction nearly south-west, toward the gulf of the Balkaun. Here then was a fact, fully established, of the accuracy of which so many have doubted, and which I did not, until this moment, fully believe. The extent to which the country has been excavated, for a channel to the waters of this mighty river, admits of no doubt of the nature of the cause producing such effects—and having traced the river, thus far, there is no possibility of its finding any other termination than the Caspian, because the land northward of its channel, in this part, is elevated far above the river valley, and besides I have since traversed it in a line which must have crossed the river channel, had it returned toward the sea of Aral. The reader, if he has curiosity and patience suf-

ficient, may find the subject detailed and discussed in the Appendix.

It is my custom, on long marches, occasionally to call my followers to my side, and make them relate some anecdote to beguile the way. Those of my Nazir, Nizaum, are very curious, but for want of timely notes, great part of them is lost. He was porter in the service of one of the Sirdars of Candahar, Ruheem Dil Khaun, I think. This chief was married to a fierce Populzye of high family, who had been very beautiful, but was now somewhat *passée*, without having lost any of her pretensions. His brother's widow, however, a very lovely creature, won his heart, and she consented to marry him. He had kept the matter a profound secret from his wife, but he was obliged, at length, in decency, to inform her. They were sitting, at the time of the explanation, upon a carpet, a brazier of live charcoal before them, it being the winter season.

"And so," said the fair Populzye, in an indifferent tone of voice, shifting a little nearer to the fire, and stretching her hands over it, "so you are really bent upon marrying this lady?"

Delighted to find his wife take it so quietly, the chief put on an air of double consequence, as he replied, "We are!"

"Then take that with her," said the Amazon, emptying the brazier of live charcoal upon his face, and then marching out of the room with great dignity.

The retaliation was very severe. Not only was his face scorched and blistered, but nearly the whole of his fine beard, that *dulce decus meum* of a Muhumedan, was singed to the roots, leaving him in the

most pitiable plight imaginable. Meanwhile, the approach of the English to the Kojuk mountains was announced, and he was summoned to aid his brother in council. He shut himself up in his Zenana, and pleaded illness. The moment was one of such urgency, that his reputation was at stake, as a man and a patriot, by his seclusion; whilst, to appear without a beard in public, and have it known that a woman was the destroyer, could not be thought of for a moment. The Populzye, however, would not suffer him to escape through his precaution. She spread the story abroad, and it soon became the theme of mirth throughout Candahar. This Amazon was a woman of great muscular strength, and used to beat her husband when it suited her purpose. He dared not put her away, on account of the power of her family, and she kept him in complete subjection. I enquired about the daughters of these chiefs, whether they were beautiful or not, but Nizaum replied—

“I have eaten their salt, and will not reveal their secrets.”

“But surely it is no breach of trust to say that such a lady is pretty or ugly. Perhaps you have never seen them?”

“Yes! I have often seen them; but they would not like their secrets to be discussed.”

I honoured Nizaum for this delicacy; and had never thought so highly of him as at that moment.

He described the chief, Kohun Dil Khaun, as the best of the brothers, in regard to abilities for government; but said that, disputes and jealousies between the three, prevented the adoption of any system of resistance. Had infantry pursued the chiefs, on our

first reaching Candahar, he says, they would have overtaken them on this side the Helmund. Every one must regret that the vigorous policy urged by our Envoy and Minister, on this occasion, was not pursued. He described the farewell of the chief, to those of his followers whom he had dismissed, as most affecting. Nizaum had offered his services, but they were declined, it being the object of the chiefs, to reduce the number of their suite, for the sake of celerity.

Unfortunately, my opportunities of committing to paper, any intelligence collected on this route, were so limited, that I have lost the greater part of Nizaum's anecdotes, many of which were highly interesting. We were often not settled until night, when, having neither chair, table, nor candle, writing was out of the question. At other times, we put up on the miry earth, in a storm of wind and rain, when it was just as much as we could do to defend ourselves from the weather. Writing, under such circumstances, is irksome, and often impracticable. But whenever it was possible I jotted down the events of the past day.

## CHAPTER XVII.

Chase of the wild Ass—Miry state of the Steppe—Intense Cold on the higher Land—Antelope of the Steppe—Dry Basin of a Lake—Particulars of the Murder at Khiva of the two European Travellers and their five Servants—Manners of the Kara Kulpauks and other Oozbeks—Character of the Country—Chalk Cliffs, &c.

**M**ARCH 21st and 22nd.—After traversing about fourteen miles of plain country, sprinkled with wormwood, we halted to refresh the horses, and suffer the camels to gain upon us. Observing here a herd of about a hundred wild asses, feeding at no great distance, I mounted, and went in pursuit. Two sportsmen, on foot, with matchlocks, were directed to circumvent them. Three mounted Toorcumuns rode in another direction, for the same purpose, and I, with two servants, filled up a fourth gap in the chain of this circle, our main party supplying the third. The herd took alarm, before our arrangements were completed, but, fortunately taking the direction of one of the footmen, the report of his matchlock checked, confused, and eventually drove them at full speed through the gap, between myself and the horses at graze. I spurred after them, but the state of the country was far too favourable to light weights. My enormous horse, encumbered by his body clothing, and his own and my weight, sunk, at the least infirm



portions of the soil, over the fetlocks, and often above the knee. Nizaum, far better mounted, and less encumbered, shot ahead of me, but his horse's feet lighting upon an unusually deep slough, horse and man rolled head over heels. I could only approach near enough to give them a couple of long shots from my carabine, and they soon were far ahead of me, their hoofs leaving little impression upon the quaking soil.

We were returning in disgust, when we observed a straggler which we had cut off, endeavouring to re-join the herd. So we spurred after him, and Summud Khaun, mounted upon a lighter horse, and having the start of me, soon gained upon him, to my great surprise. I was still more astonished to observe, that the wild ass, instead of increasing, slackened his pace, and eventually stood still, whilst Summud Khaun rode up to him with a pistol. The pistol burnt priming, and the ass attacked the horse with teeth and heels, not seeming to understand that the rider was in reality his enemy. Summud Khaun drew his sabre, and cut the animal over the crest, and one of the Toorcumuns coming up with a spear, despatched him.

I was disappointed in this game, which I had supposed infinitely more fleet and staunch. The fact is, that the wild ass which feeds in herds in the steppe, is very different from that which lives an almost solitary life, at the skirt of the mountains, in Persia, Heraut, and Syria. The difference is probably confined to their respective habits. The latter is chased with relays of dogs and horses; the former soon flags, becomes obstinate, and finally halts, to kick and bite the horse of his pursuer. Summud Khaun, who has

chased many of these in the plains of Candahar, assures me, that a well-mounted horseman can always overtake them. The quarry just killed was a veritable donkey. The only observable difference, that the ears are not much larger than those of an ordinary horse. The back sinews are farther separated from the bone, and the hoofs of wider spread. In size it did not exceed the ass of England. At the close of this march, we found ourselves on the skirt of a valley, formed probably by the Oxus in very remote days. A coarse-featured old man rode out from the Kuzzauk Khail, to meet us, upon a double-humped camel, and having the usual bonnet of wolf's fur (hair inwards), which I and my people have been glad to adopt in this severe climate. His figure would have afforded an excellent subject for the pencil, and his double-humped camel was as strange an animal as himself. We could only learn from him, that some sugar would be very acceptable, and that we were welcome to his Khail. His language defied the ingenuity of my interpreter.

March 23rd.—A large bank of clouds had been visible all the preceding day, on the north-east, over the sea of Aral. In spite of a strong easterly wind, they appeared immoveable; but, being warned by previous experience, I anticipated rain and snow, nor was I deceived. The rain commenced during the night, and continued until the next evening, to our great discomfort. The country, already saturated with snow water, has become one wide marsh, and our perplexity is increased by the deceitfulness of appearances, the soil which the eye judges firmest generally proving the most treacherous. In other countries of such uneven surface, water runs off to

the valleys, but this soil imbibes every drop ; the earth probably having acquired porosity by the freezing of the water it contained, which would enlarge the pores ; the subsequent thaw of this ice leaving them open. With infinite toil we accomplished ten miles, the rain falling all the while, and our horses sinking deep at every step. We then sat down upon some wet herbs, which we gathered, and disposed to prevent our sinking in the mud, and continued thus three hours in the rain, until the arrival of the camels. These luckless animals, heavily laden, sank at every step in the most hopeless manner. I pitched my tent over the mud, and took up my abode for the night, but not until I had seen my servants as well sheltered as circumstances would allow. The bags of grain, piled in walls, form some protection from the wind, and a large thick nummud or felt, stretched above, forms something of a roof ; nevertheless, these, and their abundant supply of woollen and furs, would not have saved them from wet, had not the rain ceased early in the night.

March 24th.—We resumed our march through a country in the state I have just described, and proceeded fifteen miles with the utmost labour. No tent has been visible during the last two days. The sky was overcast, but the rain spared us. The surface, here, is furrowed by deep ravines, whose course is south by a point west. The soil was everywhere trampled by the hoofs of wild asses, and manured with their dung. We put up for the night beyond a trifling eminence, called Ulla Suckul, or the “pie-bald beard,” in consequence of the snow melting from its ridges, and lying in the ravines.

March 25th.—The country to-day was somewhat

firmer. The route, we have hitherto travelled, is practicable only in winter, when snow water is procurable. The summer route is farther north-east, but has no firewood. At the distance of fifteen miles we fell into this track, which is indeed bare. At twenty-five miles distance halted. No habitation in sight all day.

March 26th.—We entered, this day, upon a region much colder, from its elevation, than any we have passed, although we have made little north latitude, and the season has progressed sixteen days, since leaving Khiva. The snow was here lying in great abundance, and the spots from which it had melted were so miry, as greatly to distress the cattle. My best riding horse is spavined from his exertions. He was a present from Shauh Kaumraun, king of Heraut, to Major Todd, the British Envoy; a beautiful figure, and about sixteen hands high, but having no legs equal to his great weight. We struck south-west, to avoid a valley inundated with snow water, and encamped again in the wilderness. No human dwelling. The cold is now excessive. The cattle, though abundantly supplied with warm clothing, suffer from exposure to the wind all night, for it was not possible to secure their legs effectually, or to prevent breaches below, through which the wind penetrates to the belly and haunches. The intense chill of the north wind, in these parts, cannot be conjectured by any, who has not wintered on an extensive continent. The breath clings in icicles to the pillow and bed-clothes, within the tent. Towels, hung up to dry in a close room with a fire, or in the sun, are instantly stiffened into ice, and water freezes hard, within three feet of a charcoal fire. By dint of incessant manipu-

lation, I contrived to preserve my nose. All the rest of my head and face was snugly packed in fox's fur, but in spite of every precaution, my nose would project; every now and then, as I exerted the muscles of the nostril, I felt the process of congelation commencing; and although my fingers were of a violet colour, and stiff as sealing-wax, yet my hand formed an arch, under which the heat of the breath collected and thawed the proboscis. My feet were however perfectly secure. Over cotton socks, I had drawn stockings of shawl-goat's wool, over these a pair of wolf's-fur stockings (hair inwards), over these the huge riding boots of Persia, and over those a stocking of thick felt. The north wind was completely puzzled: but I was very helpless when dismounted, as all heavy dragoons are, the more especially, as these elephantine shanks were propped upon heels three inches high, and tapering downward to an acute point, so that a gardener might have followed me with young cabbages, and have dropped a plant into each heel-print, as I moved.

March 27th.—Ascended some high land dappled with snow, and camped near a well called Ooroosse Kooia, because a Russian captive, halting here on his way to Khiva, assured his captors, that they would find water, by digging in this spot.

March 28th.—Ascended some high land covered with snow. Wind scarcely endurable. Thence descended into a valley, and camped at the distance of twenty miles. We every day see herds of wild asses\* and flocks of antelopes (if so I may term them). One of the latter, a male, was brought me to-day. The glare of the snow had blinded it. It is truly a

\* I counted 100 wild asses in a single herd.

singular animal. The body, legs, and tail, resemble those of the common, small antelope. The fur, however, is almost white, and the horns, shaped like those of the antelope of Khorussaun, are white and pellucid. The ear resembles that of the camel. It is small, round, and hidden in the long hair of the neck. The head in profile is like the sheep's, the nose excessively arched, and formed of flesh and cartilage, not bone. It terminates like a double-barrelled gun, in two circular holes destitute of the fungus, common to that organ in the brute creation, and appears as if lopped of its natural termination by some sharp instrument. The nostrils are invisible in profile. These orifices however, have vertical muscles, by which the upper arch is brought down flat upon the lower, as in the camel's nose. The eye is small as the sheep's, but black like the antelope's. The head is singularly, ludicrously ugly. It has the action and habits of the antelope, but is much smaller than that of India. It seems to form a link between the sheep and antelope, and is essentially different from the wild sheep and goat of the mountains. The Toorcumuns call it Kaigh : they hunt it with their large coarse grey-hounds.

March 29th and 30th.—The country continued as before, a high table-land, deeply furrowed by parallel ravines, whose course is nearly south by a point or two west. The heights generally betraying the shell limestone, upon which the soil rests; the whole sprinkled with wormwood, camel thorn, and a brown herb without scent, which is not eaten by cattle. When I call the whole of this country a steppe, it will be understood, that I have not seen the leaf of a tree, nor a permanent habitation, since quitting the

valley of the Oxus ; many of the Kuzzauks have never seen either. At the close of this stage, we descended nearly 1,200 feet, into the basin of a quondam lake, and there encamped. The descent is by a ravine, scarped on either side by cliffs yielding crystallized carbonate of lime, of which large and beautiful masses had rolled to the foot of the precipice. The descent is very gradual. The bottom of this ravine is encrusted with saline exudations ; and a crystalline spring, which tempts the eye, is strongly impregnated with salt.

In descending from the table-land, I called Ali Muhummud to my side, and questioned him upon a variety of particulars.

"I was at Khiva," he said, "when the two English travellers were murdered."

"Why do you suppose they were English?"

"I know they were. They said so. It was not until they were tortured, that they confessed themselves Russians. One was a light-haired youth, the other was older and darker. They had five Persian servants, and had arrived from Meshed. Just then the Khiva ambassador had been insulted in Russia, his brother being imprisoned there. The king's Dewaun Beegie, an avaricious and ill-natured man, told the Khaun that they were Russians. He demanded their passports. They had none. He sent them to the house of the Dewaun Beegie, and soon after the Ghoosh Beegie was sent to them by night with a party of torturers. Red-hot skewers were run through their flesh, and red-hot iron trailed over their skin. The result is not known, but the Ghoosh Beegie, who had an eye to part of their plunder, said, they had confessed themselves Russian spies, and he

gave this testimony to the Khaun Huzurut. The Khaun was still furious, at the repeated insults his ambassadors had received, and ordered their execution. They had on the first occasion been taken asleep, so could make no defence, and now they were unarmed. Their throats were cut in the dead of night, and their bodies and those of their five servants were carried out at night, and buried in the sand of the desert. People say they made no confession; but the Ghoosh Beegie and Dewaun Beegie had an interest in asserting the contrary. Their arms were lodged in the royal treasury. Their books were given to the Mehtur. No one dares to mention the circumstance at Khiva, especially since your arrival, for your case is exactly like theirs."

"And where was the late minister, Aga Yoosuph, who is so highly spoken of? Did he give no better counsel?"

"He, unfortunately, was on an expedition to the south, and did not hear of the matter until his return. It was then too late. He remonstrated strongly with the Khaun Huzurut upon the cruelty of the procedure; and there is no doubt, that had he arrived in time, it would not have happened."

Such is the substance of Ali's answers to my queries. He had no proof to offer that these men were English: I had many circumstantial arguments against the supposition. Major Todd, the Envoy at Heraut, had resided many years, in an official capacity, at Tehraun, and had still correspondence with our functionaries in Persia. He had heard the circumstances of the case, and it was his firm belief, that the murdered men were *not* English, and that, in all probability, whatever their nation, they were spies of



Russia. All the more intelligent natives to whom I had access were of the same opinion. The common people believed they *were* English, but had not even circumstantial evidence to support the supposition; and as they had believed, until my arrival, that the Russians were the only European nation, so they now divided Europe between England and Russia; and in saying that such and such an European was English, meant no more than to assert that he was not Russian. Had these travellers been English, some of our authorities must, in time, have learnt the fact; but I could hear nothing of them from the Home Government; and my brother, who was in Persia when they were murdered, believes they were neither English nor Russian. The Russians explicitly deny them, and are very anxious that we should believe the travellers to have been English.

Ali had visited Ghoonghuraut, a town of the Kara Kulpauk Oozbegs, near the southern coast of the sea of Aral. He assures me, that the singular custom attributed to the inhabitants, is really observed by them. This I shall notice in the Appendix, lest it be stumbled upon at some unlucky moment. The picture he draws of the manners of the Kara Kulpauks, is sufficiently disagreeable. But we must be careful, in reprobating them, to avoid the injustice of condemning the people themselves; who must, of necessity, form their standard of morals from immemorial custom, and the example of their fathers.

The manners of the Oozbegs of Khiva are equally, if not more revolting. The wife, utterly neglected by her lord, is naturally careless of his and her own honour. Nay, it is asserted, that not a few wives divide with their husbands the wages of their humi-

liation. This is the more glaring, that the outward observances, in the intercourse of the sexes, are so extremely rigid in Central Asia; and the fallen angels of our European cities are here utterly unknown. Much of Ali's information will be found in the Appendix, mixed with that acquired from other sources; I shall, therefore, not here repeat more of the conversation of this day, from which I derived many interesting particulars. Ali is a sensible fellow, and has a good memory. But having been sixteen years a slave at Khiva, and being an extremely good-natured fellow, my Meerza and Summud Khaun have contrived to subject him to themselves, and from being my interpreter, he has fairly become their slave. I have several times interfered to prevent this, but to little purpose. Ali's easy nature renders the bondage light; and as soon as my back is turned, the others exert their authority, and Ali submits without a struggle. I mention this, because in the sequel it proved of the utmost consequence, confounding all my precautions against the treachery with which I was surrounded. Ali's good nature proceeded from no want of spirit. One of the Toorcumun camel-drivers, after long provoking him, was laid flat on his back by a box on the ear from the quondam slave, who grinned his delight to see one of his old oppressors prostrate at his feet. Ali is a good-looking fellow, and has a handsome beard, which were probably the keys to his liberty, being irresistible arguments with the fair Oozbegs, who enrich their favourites at their lord's expense, being always keepers of the purse. He had accordingly purchased his discharge in sixteen years.

March 31st.—Everything here has the appearance

of proximity to the sea; the basin of this large lake, scarped with precipices, and girt with land of considerable elevation, having a bottom still destitute of vegetation, dark and level, as if but a few years abandoned by its waters. The chalk cliffs visible in the distance, the whole form and character of the surface, lead one to anticipate a sight of the Caspian from every fresh height we ascend. Nevertheless, Hussun assures me, we have still some five or six marches before us; and as he always under-estimates the distance, it is reasonable to reckon it some eight or ten marches.

We crossed the bed of this quondam lake, which, notwithstanding the appearances I have mentioned, has not been occupied by water within memory of any of the Toorcumuns present, or of the traditions handed down to them. The portion visible at a *coup d'œil* is an area of about twelve by seven miles, but I suspect it winds on the south, until it reaches the Caspian. After passing this lake, we ascended chalk cliffs, which wall in the valleys here in a singular manner, speaking of a much higher level in the waters of the Caspian than they at present hold.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

Rapacity of the Guide—Physiognomy of the Kuzzauks—  
Nizaum's extreme Amusement at the Sight of beardless Men  
—The Dragon of Heraut—The Petrified Dragon of Candahar  
Existence of a Species of Boa amongst the Mountains of  
Afghaunistaun—Anecdote of Shah Kaumraun—Singular  
Fate of a Tent-mallet—Chalk Cliffs—Kuzzauks.

APRIL 1st.—We are now fairly in Kuzzauk land. The country is everywhere spotted with their black tents, their flocks and herds. Yesterday, whilst halting near a Khail to refresh the horses, half-a-dozen of the women came to me to beg. They were all so hideous, that my heart was not melted, so I gave the little children each a lump of sugar, and dismissed them. To-day, Hussun called at several Khails to plunder. At one of these a woman, with face like the sun in Cancer, and person half naked, was leading a young camel swathed in an old cloak. Never, surely, was there such a failure in the tailor's department. The effect was infinitely ludicrous, for the young camel did not half approve of the vestment, nor of the guidance of the fair Kuzzauk; whose fairest, by the way, was a hue more generally esteemed in beet-root than in woman. The fair thing started when she saw us, and like the Irishman troubled with a short blanket, endeavoured, by a rapid counter-march of garment, to supply deficiencies. Indian

women, on such occasions, are far more economical. They hide only the face; all the rest is a mere question in natural philosophy. The guide asked, if the master of the tent was at home, and received the invariable answer, "Yokh" (he is *not*). The Yuze Baushee entered the tent, and found him there. I pleaded hard for these poor creatures, but in vain. Avarice has no ears. The Yuze Baushee, as he remounted, was assisted by the fair Kuzzauk, who, whilst she held down the stirrup on the off-side, gave him her hand over the saddle, to the infinite horror and amazement of Summud Khaun, whose face lengthened pitiably, as he exclaimed three times, "La hola!" (avaunt). The Kuzzauk women have no bashfulness. It does not follow that they want modesty, as is generally believed.

We proceeded to another Khail. A girl of about thirteen years, dressed in a cloak, and having the head bound carelessly with a red scarf, was adjusting the tent. She had in her ears a pair of silver ear-drops, set here and there with what seemed precious stones, and not less than half a foot in length. They were flat, and shaped like the head of a spear. Here the ceremony of plundering was renewed, but I would not sanction by my presence, that which my remonstrances failed to prevent. The Kuzzauks are the ugliest race I have yet seen. Their complexion is a dirty white, burnt here and there, as on the nose and cheek bones, to the colour of raw beef. The cheek bones are high. The face is either circular or triangular. The lips are thin, eyes small, ill-formed, ill-coloured, and half opened. The nose is a hideous aquiline—with sprawling nostrils. The men have generally no symptoms of beard, which greatly amused Nizaum,

who has six ill-conditioned bristles upon his own chin. He couldn't contain his mirth. This smoothness of lip and chin, and the similarity in the attire of the sexes, render it very difficult for a stranger to distinguish them. The head-dress is a bonnet of inverted lamb's or wolf's fur. The cloak is generally of skin. The feet are cased in hessians of brown leather. The average stature of those we have hitherto seen is about five feet three inches, but I am assured these are unfavourable specimens.

As we rode down the valley, I called Sumnud Khaun to my side, to enquire about a tradition I had heard at Heraut concerning the origin of the bridge there. He had not heard it, so I was obliged to relate it to him, in the hope that he might either add something to it, or give me another marvel in exchange.

In days that have left us but a few dim records of their existence, the city of Heraut was desolated by a monstrous dragon, which lived in a cavern at the foot of the mountains northward of the city, where his trail has left, to this day, a scattering of rubies. This monster, who had a predilection for human flesh, and who found, by trial, that young maidens were the choicest morsels, confined himself to this delicate dish. Now, as this nightly visit to the city, in search of his prey, greatly incommoded housekeepers and other valuable servants of the State, the king, by means of his ambassador, Sheikh Robár-ool Islaum, compounded with the dragon for a scarcity of his presence, upon condition that he, the king, should send nightly to the monster's cavern, a young and tender virgin.

Now there lived at Heraut a brother and sister, whose hearts were knit together in the most devoted

affection. They had early lost their parents, and were all in all to one another. Each mind seemed formed to be the echo of the other. When the one spake, the other sat as in a dream. The words had been before heard in the depth of the spirit, in the stillness of thought: the idea, fresh and new to others, was fresh to her, but not new: it had shaped itself into being before, but it waited to appear upon the lips she loved best. A chord no less real that it was invisible, knit those hearts together in a single sympathy. Often, the one paused and restrained his words, because he saw the thought that burthened his tongue in those mirrors of the soul—his sister's eyes. Mirrors of the soul I have called them. They were mirrors of his own soul, and when he would search out its hidden mysteries, he gazed into his sister's eyes. The lines he addressed to her, were feeble records of his love, and yet, the most tender language of which we are capable naturally moulds itself into verse. I cannot repeat them all, but here is a fragment:—

We grew not, my sister, as others have grown,  
Twin buds, whom stern Nature's decree  
Hath combined, on one stem in appearance alone,  
Whilst their hearts remain single and free.

No! the blest bond of Nature was never so dear,  
Nor the chord of accordance so sweet,  
As was proved, in contracting and closing the sphere,  
Where our souls were to mingle and meet.

For what was the life of my childish delight?  
Oh! was it not centred in thee?  
And knew'st thou a bliss so engaging, so bright,  
As *was* bliss till partaken with me?

No! never was echo more true to the note,  
Stealing lightly its slumber away,  
Nor the star in the lake to the planet remote,  
Hanging o'er it in fondest delay;

Than the soul of my sister was true to the love  
 Which reposed, like an infant at rest  
 (When secure in the clasp that affection has wove),  
 On thine artless, thine innocent breast.

And again, when accidentally absent for a few days  
 from the house, which was his country, since it encir-  
 cled all that earth held for him of precious:—

O doubly an exile, since sever'd from thee!  
 The wilderness blossoms no more;  
 'Tis the fitting abode of the tameless and free,  
 But *my* heart loved the fetters it wore.

The gentle gazelle, with her large, mournful eye,  
 Gleaming sad in the midst of delight,  
 May love o'er its sands with the whirlwind to vie,  
 For her partner still lingers in sight.

But had she a sister's affection e'er known,  
 The endearment of answering minds,  
 How sad would she traverse that bleak waste alone,  
 'Mid the strife of the desolate winds.

For 'tis hard for two hearts that have grown up in love  
 Till their roots are inwoven and twined,  
 To survive the stern wrench that would seek to remove,  
 Or the shock that would seek to unwind.

Together they flourish'd, together they fed  
 At the same desert fountain, and all  
 Their leaves to the same sunny radiance they spread:—  
 Together, together they fall.

Heaven is rich in blessing, to our thankless race,  
 but has no blessing more pure, more precious, more  
 lovely, than a sister's affection; neither is there aught,  
 in the wide circle of the universe, which the Most  
 Holy contemplates with greater complacency.

Now it happened, in the natural course of events,  
 that the lot fell upon this maiden, to be devoured by  
 the dragon. It was in vain that the brother, hearing  
 of the sentence, implored the king to substitute him,  
 in disguise, for his sister. The monarch, though  
 touched, dared not comply with a suggestion tending,



if discovered, to incense the monster against his people ; neither could the sister have survived her brother's loss. But, as it was equally impossible for him to live without *her*, he determined to accompany her to the dragon's den. It was then, when his resolution not to survive her had been taken, that his courage rose, and called upon his invention to save the being that was existence to him. He purchased the fattest sheep in the city, a Doombha ; a sheep of mighty tail ; a sheep goodly throughout, but increasing in goodness toward its latter end.

Ah ye Schoolmasters ! Why ! why was there no Doombha variety of school-boy ?

The Doombha, we have said, was purchased, and the youth proceeded to flay, to disembowel it, and to fill the cavity with quicklime. The fatal morning dawned, and found them at the mouth of the dragon's den.

Now, it was the especial whim of this dragon, never to commence with the head of his victim : for, when the body was fairly down his throat, and his teeth were grinding on the skull, a dexterous movement of jaw and tongue enabled him to eject the scalp, with its hair and accompaniments of pomatum and tortoiseshell combs : not to mention those long and formidable double-pointed pins, the steel traps of our fair ones' heads. The brother and sister, aware of this, and each anxious for the escape of the other, had long vied with one another, which should farthest protrude the feet ; and the strife had terminated in their lying heads outward and feet together.

The sun had thrown his first gleam upon the snowy mountains, when a hiss resounded from the recesses of the cavern ; and a volume of blue and yellow smoke,

villainously rank of sulphur, issued from the den. Then came the rattle and the screech of scales, and the head of the dragon appeared. Two jets of fire spouted from his nostrils, shedding a lurid gleam upon the bleak air of morn. Gliding in mighty coils of green and gold, he came on. The scales of his belly were transparent. The fire, rolling with the current of his blood, suffused them with a ruby hue. He lifted his head into the clouds, and, for a moment, the sun's light paled upon the distant mountains, in the glare of those terrific eyes.

But now he stooped his head slowly to the earth, and snuffed at his shuddering prey—for even love could not wholly quell the trembling of the flesh—he snuffed at the end, nearest to him. His nostril was tickled by a straggling tress. He next essayed the other end: with a like unsatisfactory result. And now he was fairly bewildered.

As he sniffed from end to end, in extreme perplexity, a something of that rosy, amberous, cinnamon hue, with which mortals are familiar on the surface of roast mutton, attracted his eye; and, at the same instant, a zephyr fluttering from the cage of Aurora, strewed upon his nostril an aroma so appetizing, that instantly he was bending over the carcass of the sheep.

He bowed his head caressingly toward it. He applied his nostril. He lifted his nose above six of the seven heavens, whilst with curling snout he drew in, to the very medulla of the brain, this new and delectable savour. He dipped his tongue, for a taste, into the marrow of the tail. He determined, henceforward to eschew raw maidens, and chew only roasted mutton. It was his first lesson in virtue. It proved

his last. He laid himself, at full length, upon the earth, and sucked down the savoury morsel.

The brother and sister, meanwhile, lay still as death, awaiting the result. Hour after hour passed, and the monster lay supine before them, groaning from excess of comfort, and lolling out his forked tongue. But, when the juices penetrated the mutton case, the irritation produced by the quicklime, occasioned an insufferable thirst, and the monster trailed his slow length toward the Hurrie Rood, where at present it is crossed by the Pool-i-Mālān, or bridge of Mālān. There, he plunged his head amid the waves, and drew the powerful current, from its immemorial channel, into the caverns of his own bowels. The tide, rushing through his parched jaws and gullet, and meeting the quicklime, burst forth into vapour, and then into flames. In vain the huge serpent wallowed in the cold and glittering waters of the river, they were but as fresh fuel to the consuming fire within. The men of the city, terrified with his groans, retired each to his inmost chamber, and secured the doors. The king issued a proclamation permitting his loyal subjects to funk. Even his Lord of the Kulleaun was not beheaded, although the tobacco burnt blue that night in the royal Kulleaun—an instance of mercy still quoted in honour of the better days of ages gone. But, at midnight, the groans and bellowings had ceased, and, when morning dawned, the lifeless carcass of the dragon was found extended across the river, and arresting the waves.

The brother and sister had risen from the earth, and embraced one another in a transport of emotion, which vented itself in thanksgiving and tears. These

having subsided, they explored together the den of death. It wound for miles beneath the mountain, but the sulphurous trail of the serpent was a clue to the inmost recess. There they found his bed, a mighty heap of emeralds, rubies, and diamonds. They loaded themselves with treasure, and returned to report proceedings to the king. Being a singularly benevolent monarch, he graciously issued an edict, bequeathing to them and their heirs for ever all the husks and chippings of the jewels in the process of cutting, an edict which made them the richest subjects in the land. Their subsequent fate is not known, but the lady, in commemoration of this great deliverance, employed part of her wealth in building that wonder of the world (I speak as an Herautie) across the Hurrie Rood, in the very spot where the carcass of the monster was found.

I need not particularize how much of this tale I related to Summud Khaun, how much have since added. The tradition is a *bonâ fide* tradition of Heraut, and the embellishments, if such they be, will be easily detected.

Summud Khaun could tell me nothing additional to this tradition, which he had never heard, having been only fifteen or sixteen years at Heraut; but he related a similar tale, more generally known, and religiously believed, of a dragon which had almost depopulated Candahar.

"In the days," he said, "of his Highness Ali, whom his Highness Muhummud called the 'Sword of the Faith,' there dwelt, one short march from the city of Candahar, a terrible dragon, the very facsimile of that you have just described; the same his fiery breath, his propensity to human flesh, his unac-

countable preference for young maidens. What is yet more remarkable, is the fact that the king of Candahar, who was an idolater, like all his people, made precisely the agreement you have narrated with the dragon, and every morning a young maiden was sent upon a camel to be devoured. But the Candahar dragon must have been very much larger than him of Heraut, for so soon as the camel and his burthen came within a certain distance, the dragon drew in his breath violently, thereby occasioning a whirlwind, which hurried both camel and rider down, through his jaws and gullet, into his meat-safe."

"Prodigious!" I ejaculated with due gravity, for, as these marvels form, it may be said, part of the religion of Afghauns, I would not, for worlds, insult their feelings by a symptom of incredulity.

"Now, when the lot fell upon the most beautiful of the virgins of Candahar, the whole city was plunged in the deepest affliction. She was placed upon a camel, and sent toward the dragon's abode, amongst the hills which you left to your right on the road to Girishk. By the mercy of God, his Highness Ali was riding toward Candahar, and met the maiden on the road. He was struck by her extreme beauty, and much more by her evident distress. He reined up his fiery steed, enquired the cause of her tears, and offered his services for her deliverance. She told her tale, hopeless of relief, for she knew not it was the Sword of the Faith that accosted her. But Ali bade her be of good cheer, and to believe that Heaven had sent her deliverance. He carried her to a shepherd's tent in the neighbourhood where he deposited her; and, himself mounting her camel, rode toward the

monster's abode, on the summit of a ridge of heights. No sooner did the dragon behold the approach of the camel, laden, as he supposed, with his daily meal, than, sucking in his breath, he opened his huge jaws like the gates of hell, and the camel was hurried, like a shot, forward, as it seemed, to destruction. But, at the instant preceding contact, the hero rose high in his stirrups, and, giving full swing to his resistless sword, smote the dragon over the crest with such strength that he sank his head, writhing, to the earth, his neck half severed by the stroke.

“The rapture of the maiden may be imagined; the joy and jubilee of the inhabitants of Candahar cannot be described, but they soon found their triumph to be premature. The decay of a carcass so enormous produced a fearful pestilence, and the dragon in his death proved more mighty than in his life.

“In this extremity, the king sent a deputation to the ransomed virgin, entreating her to seek out Ali, and make known to him the state to which Candahar was reduced.

“His Highness Ali consented to rescue them from this pestilence, upon condition that the king should issue an edict to all his subjects to believe in the true and only God; and, as this condition was to cost the monarch only one sheet of foolscap, and the heads of about ten thousand of his subjects, who either could not, or at any rate would not, believe; His Majesty, of course, instantly complied.

“His point gained, the saintly Ali caused proclamation to be made that no living thing should approach within a mile of the carcass of the dragon; an order obeyed by all, but an old woman and a goat, the two most wilful of animals; the latter because she liked to

stay, the former because others wished her to be gone. Ali then bent his knee, and lifted up his eyes and hands to heaven, imploring Him who created all things to remove this scourge of His creatures. Instantly there fell from heaven, by the mercy of the Almighty, a petrifying influence, acting upon all substances within a limited circle. The trees, the shrubs, the fowls of the air, the insects, the mighty festering carcass, and the unclean birds and beasts that had approached to devour it, all were suddenly converted into stone. The old gentlewoman, who, with arms akimbo, was just beginning to laugh at Ali's prostrations, comparing him to a woodpecker tapping a hollow tree, and the old goat, who was just devouring a plant of assafetida, because the cow had warned her that it would poison her milk, were alike changed into black rocks, and remain to this day as testimonies of the piety of Ali, the unsavouriness of dead dragons, and the perverseness of old women and goats."

"Have you ever seen them?" I enquired innocently.

"Seen them! of course I have; not only have I seen the old woman and goat petrifications, and the skeleton of the dragon, but have actually seen the gash made in the crest of the dragon by the mighty Ali. Did *you* never see them, Sir?"

"I can't say that I have; I have, however, seen something almost as wonderful, a deep notch of some three hundred feet, in a ridge of mountains (on your left, after leaving Girishk for Furrah), said to be chipped by the sword of Ali, in a fit of idleness, as he sat upon another mountain, about five miles off; did you never see this?"

"No, Sir, but I have seen many people who have."

"What is the skeleton of the dragon like?"

"It has been so worn by the weather, that at present, it is no better than a chain of stones, each about three feet in height, stretched over the mountain ridge. They are now of a black colour, but no doubt were at first white, the colour of bones. The gash made by Ali's sword is very remarkable."

"And the old woman and goat?"

"They look just like rocks."

This tradition I had previously heard from several natives of Candahar, but was glad to allow Summud Khaun to tell it his own way, for the sake of comparing his narration with others. There are, probably, few considerable cities of Central Asia, that have not their tales of dragons and young virgins. That a species of Boa-constrictor is found in the mountains, I can scarcely doubt, owing to numberless accounts, current, of their appearance. They are, I presume, similar to those found in the Himalaya range, seldom exceeding twelve or fourteen feet, but of disproportionate thickness, and great muscular power.

His Majesty Shauh Kaumraun, of Heraut, told me that he was one day resting his gun upon a rock in the mountains, to fire at an antelope, when a large serpent rose up beneath his gun. He coolly fired and killed the antelope, and then destroyed the snake. This account of the royal courage was confirmed by eye-witnesses.

At the termination of the valley we had been crossing, we ascended some cliffs, and encamped at the summit. Snow lay in great abundance under the



brow of these cliffs, affording us a supply of excellent water.

Observing Summud Khaun driving tent-pins, with the back of his battle-axe, I inquired after the tent-mallet.

"Oh!" replied Summud Khaun, "nobody knows what has become of it."

Presently his horse, which he held by the bridle, stepped up to a small heap of firewood, collected for our use, and ate five or six sticks, of very decent dimensions, with evident relish.

"What can be hoped of a country," exclaimed Summud Khaun, "in which the horses steal our firewood and call it hay."

"Oh!" replied the old Meerza, rubbing his hands slowly over the fire, "that accounts for the loss of the tent-mallet."

The entire want of grass, in a country famous for nothing but its horses, is a phenomenon. Our cattle, since leaving Khiva, have had nothing in the shape of fodder, excepting a little sapless brushwood.

April 2nd.—We continued our march over a country little altered in aspect, and encamped at night, in a high, bleak plain, where we were supplied from a puddle of snow water, clear and refreshing.

April 3rd.—At the distance of five miles, found ourselves at the brink of some chalk cliffs, and a difference of level of about seven hundred feet. Followed the brink about ten miles, and then struck over a table-land on an azimuth of  $385^{\circ}$ , and encamped in a shallow valley. Five Kuzzauks, the most hideous I have seen of this ugly race, came and chatted with us. Hussun had plundered them of several articles of furniture, as tribute; alleging that he was in charge

of two hundred horse, and half-a-dozen large cannon, besides an English ambassador.

April 4th.—After progressing twelve miles, we again reached the brink of the chalk cliffs, and descended into the deserted bed of some large river, that had once flowed into the Caspian, perhaps the Jaxartes. The bottom is hard sand, and extremely barren. Here we found a small Kawreeze (or chain of wells) called Sogun, but no fodder. At sunset we encamped near some Kuzzauk tents.

Here I, for the first time, missed our little companion, the Afghaun boy, belonging to the Toorcumun slave-dealer. I inquired for him, and Sumnud Khaun replied with tears in his eyes, that the poor little fellow had been sold, the day before, to Kuzzauks of that neighbourhood, for a certain number of sheep. I was angry with my people, for not giving me timely intelligence. Some arrangement might have been effected for his freedom. I had set my heart upon it, and felt keenly the disappointment. The fate of this child hung heavy upon me for the rest of the journey. It had never occurred to me, that a purchaser might be found for him, ere we reached Mungh Kishlauk. His light-hearted prattle, his occasional moments of depression and of tears, when he remembered better days, all haunted me with sadness, which nothing could dispel.

April 5th.—During the process of loading the camels, I wandered towards the nearest Kuzzauk tents, which I found preparing for a removal; the tents and baggage being packed upon about sixteen camels, led by the women, in their high-peaked bonnets of wolf's fur, and coarse cloaks, girt at the waist with rope or leathern thongs. The children were

securely packed above the baggage, in a situation seemingly, on first view, sufficiently perilous. I saw a child of four years, wrestling with a young camel of four days, which had no notion of obeying such an urchin.

It was an absurd sight; the camel, although so young, towering far above the little bully, and twisting and writhing its long neck above his head to avoid the blows. Mind, however, at length mastered Matter. The women, at a short distance, resemble peonies. Their faces are furiously red. Their features extremely coarse. They have the figures of bears, and the dress of toad-stools, torn by the gale.

## CHAPTER XIX.

Story of Hautim, the Arab—Face of the Country—Melancholy Prospects—Some Account of the Descendants of Cyrus the Great—Herds of Galloways—Kuzzauks—The Snake—Ali's Dream—Origin of Tobacco—Lawfulness of Pigtail—Goat's Milk—Liberty of the Fair Sex *sometimes* abused.

WHEN we had mounted and ridden to some distance, I called upon the Meerza for a tale. The old fellow has a considerable store of anecdote which he relates with some humour.

“Did you ever hear the story of Hautim?” he inquired.

“Never! let me have it.”

“Hautim was an Arab chief, in the days of Nowshirwaun. He possessed a horse, marvellous for its beauty and speed, the wonder and pride of Arabia. The king, who had heard of this horse, sent a nobleman of his Court to purchase it. This emissary arrived at Hautim's tent, when every item of household stores, his camels, sheep, goats, and even horses had been consumed in hospitality. The beautiful Arab horse alone remained. Hautim's heart bled for his steed, as without hesitation, he slew him to feed his guest. The next day, the emissary opened his mission, by stating that he was sent by the king to purchase, at any price, Hautim's famous steed.

“‘I deeply regret,’ answered Hautim, ‘that you did not at once intimate your purpose; you ate the flesh of my horse last night. It was the last animal left me, and my guest had a right to it.’

“The king, on learning his disappointment, instead of admiring the munificence of Hautim, burst into a fit of fury, and sent another noble to bring him the head of Hautim, on pain of death to himself. This messenger, losing his road, was invited by a stranger to put up at his tent. There, he was entertained in a style of hospitality, so kind and magnificent, that he was struck with admiration, and penetrated with gratitude. After dinner, he related the purpose of his mission, and begged his host to put him in the way of discovering Hautim; to which the host readily consented. He retired to rest; at midnight he was awakened, and opening his eyes, beheld his host standing over him, with a drawn sword. He feared, at first, he had fallen into the hands of a robber, but his host quickly re-assured him.

“‘You seek Hautim,’ he said. ‘He stands before you. You require his head. Take it,’ (presenting the sabre, and baring his throat). ‘You are his guest, and have a right to it. Fear nothing, but strike. My family are wrapt in slumber, your horse is saddled at the door. I did it with my own hand, that none might be disturbed. Why do you hesitate? Is it fear? You are perfectly safe; do you deem Hautim a niggard of his hospitality?’

“The messenger fell at Hautim’s feet, and with tears sought forgiveness. Death awaited him on his return to his master; but it seemed a light penalty, in comparison with the crime of murdering Hautim. He returned to the monarch, and related his tale, ex-

pecting instant execution. But the king's heart was at length touched. He repented of his cruelty, and wishing to make some poor amends, and farther to put to the proof the generosity of Hautim, sent to beg of him a hundred beautiful camels. Hautim instantly despatched messengers throughout the land, to purchase the choicest, and soon sent the king a hundred camels, without blemish, and of the best blood. The king ordered them to be laden, from the royal treasury, with all that was beautiful and rare, and returned to Hautim with their burthens, as an offering of admiration and esteem. Hautim most gratefully acknowledged the king's liberality; but it was not in the nature of this high-minded Arab to profit by it. He sent the camels, each to its original owner, begging his acceptance of it, and its burthen of merchandize; reserving for himself only the gratification of such munificence, and the praise of being superior to the bounty of a king.

“Such was Hautim, until the angel of death removed him from a world unworthy of him. His brother, fired with emulation, determined to imitate his princely generosity. But his mother rebuked him, saying, ‘My son, this is not for thee. Thy brother, when an infant, would not take my breast until I had given the other to thee: but thou, whilst thou wert taking thy food, didst hold my other breast with thy little hand, that none might participate thine enjoyment. Meddle not with things too high for thee. The world had but one Hautim, and it hath pleased heaven to bereave the world.’”

April 6th.—The country to-day was undulating, the soil remarkably smooth, being sand, tempered with clay and vegetable matter, and resting upon shell

limestone, beneath which is chalk and marl. It is sprinkled with very low herbage. Hussun Mhatoor sent, last night, to beg I would give myself no anxiety, for that in five marches more, we should reach our journey's end. It is just six days, since he assured me we had but five marches to make. He now adds, that as we are in a fat land, where he makes money at every step, he hopes I will not be in a hurry, but allow him to glean it down. I have replied, that he will have to reckon with the Khaun Huzurut for this delay. That the Khaun, when he knows that the object of my mission has been defeated by his (Hussun's) avarice, will, in all probability, put him to death.

Indeed, although I have forborne to weary the reader with a daily detail of my melancholy feelings; my prospect is overcast with misery. I have, already, been as long upon this trifling portion of my journey, as might have sufficed to carry me to the Russian capital. Should I fail of finding a passage to Astrakhaun, ruin stares me in the face; my supplies are almost consumed, my purse is at a low ebb, and I am thousands of miles from aid that could avail me; my name will suffer with my Government; as success alone could have reconciled them to such an undertaking, and success no longer appears possible.

I enquired of Summud Khaun, particulars of the descendants of Cyrus the Great (Ky Khoosro), who are just now living at Heraut, having been driven out of the last of their hereditary possessions, in Seistaun. The names of the brothers are Humzur Khaun and Jellaulooddeen Khaun, and there is a third, son to the first. They retain, in a remarkable degree, the personal beauty which distinguished their fathers.



Jellaulooddeen Khaun is said to be without a rival in this respect, and the family resemblance is very strong. When Captain Pottinger was presenting shawl robes to some of the nobles of Heraut, none could be found of sufficient length for Humzur Khaun and Jellaulooddeen Khaun, and it was necessary to make up a set, expressly, for the sons of Cyrus.

“When Jellaulooddeen Khaun appeared at any public festival,” added Summud Khaun, “he walked like the peacock amongst lesser birds. His majestic stature, graceful person, and perfect features, attracted universal admiration, and everything was forgotten, to gaze upon the son of Cyrus. His eyes, in particular, are the largest and most beautiful in the world. Humzur Khaun was the seventh in descent of his family, since it has been driven into a small principality of Seistaun. Of this he was dispossessed five years ago by Muhummud Rezza Khaun, one of his own family, who still retains possession.”

At the distance of about thirteen miles, we found five or six wells in a valley, and near them a small cemetery, in which rude attempts had been made, to rear and carve monuments, of the coarse shell limestone of the hills. One of these graves, had, at the head, an upright piece of wood or stone, around which was wound the hat of the deceased, a female. It appeared to be of coloured silk. I could not regard it without emotion. Ali, my interpreter, gave this explanation of the symbol; but I have never seen any silk stuffs amongst the Kuzzauks, whose bonnet is lamb-skin or wolf's fur, inverted. Another upright headstone was carved into figures,



resembling somewhat the fleur-de-lis. Others had enclosures of limestone flags, built up like boxes, and having but one small aperture. All were more or less mutilated. Perhaps by cattle, perhaps by the rapacity of man.

We now entered a tract of shallow valley, absolutely devastated by the vast herds of Kuzzauk galloways; so that we could find no spot capable of yielding our horses even the miserable browse of wormwood, their sole fodder, since leaving Khiva. At night, we pitched near two or three Kuzzauk tents. A young woman, from one of these, brought out a mattock, and commenced digging the dry stems of the wormwood, as firing for us. Nizaum, supposing she was working for herself, very gallantly hastened to her assistance, and worked away furiously. The lady, accustomed to the selfish neglect of her own people, did not understand his devotion, and left the wormwood untouched, for his use; but Nizaum was far too high-spirited to appropriate it. At an intermediate halt, he asked my permission to take a lesson in carpet-weaving, of the inhabitants of a neighbouring tent. I saw him there, between two fair instructresses, laughing and learning, and making love in a breath.

April 7th.—We marched, this day, about twenty miles in a drizzling rain. Hussun entered a black tent, midway, leaving me very politely, without a guide, to sit in the rain during his absence. We crossed again the deep, wide river-channel already mentioned, and which we had been following at a short distance. Its course is to the Caspian, a little north of ours, and it is here about one and a half miles in breadth. On the left bank, we found three

children, seated in a circle, playing with pebbles. The eldest, a little girl, was beautiful, although a Kuzzauk. Our guide, a Kuzzauk deputed by Hussun, could not forbear remarking upon the security of a country, where children can amuse themselves, without protectors, at a distance from home. Half a mile farther, we reached a Kuzzauk Khail, and our guide chatted with the inmates, who came out to see him. The Kuzzauk salutation is made, by interjoining the four hands. Women and men thus salute. The Toorcumun women salute men, by laying their two hands on the men's shoulders. My Afghans are scandalized by this profane intermixture of sexes; but it is welcome to me, as a symptom of our approach to lands, where woman holds her just position in society. The women appeared at the tent doors, laughing at my strange attire, and that of my horse, the latter being a parti-coloured body clothing, of red and green worsted, beautifully woven by the Toorcumuns, but quite unknown to Kuzzauks. These women have a hideous disguise. A posteen, or cloak of sheep's hide inverted; the yellow, and usually greasy, leather appearing outward. This envelops the whole body, and renders it impossible to conjecture what is beneath; unless indeed we happen to be aware of the great scarcity of water in this country, and that the fur is never washed, from the day it leaves the sheep, to the day its last tatter falls from the owner's back. We may then congratulate ourselves, on the intervention of this leathern case, between our senses and the person of the wearer. The greasy and clumsy boots of buff leather appear below this, and above, is a fiery red, round face, pierced with two small holes and a large one, and

having a broad tumulus between; the whole swaddled in linen, intended to be white (which passes in a ragged turban round the head, and in a filthy bundle under the chin), and looking very like a red-hot warming-pan, singeing its way through a dirty dish-clout.

A few steps farther, we came upon a small snake. Sumnud Khaun had lifted his sword to kill it, when the Meerza shouted aloud, "Stop, stop, let the Sahib catch it."

I had been telling him of the ease and security with which the most venomous serpents may be caught by the hand, and although not over-pleased with the old man's officiousness, thought it of less consequence to resent the disrespect, than to prevent my people supposing me a romancer. I therefore dismounted, seized the reptile by the throat, opened his mouth, and finding therein a pair of fangs which no harmless snakes possess, perceived that he was worthy of death, threw him on the earth, and killed him with my horse-whip, to the great horror of Yakoob, the Meer-a-Khor, who declared that the whip would now poison my horse. I remounted, and proceeded. After riding a short distance, it suddenly occurred to the Meerza, that I had just fulfilled in part a dream, which Ali Muhummud had told us, two days ago. Ali in his sleep had seen a venomous snake approach our party, at sight of which my people took to flight: I killed this snake. From its blood sprang a bird, which I knocked down with a stone, ordering him, Ali, to pick up its feathers. This dream had been much discussed; for all my followers are firm believers in such supposed revelations; and various auguries were drawn from it, relative to my mission; most of

them flattering me with success. The serpent was Russia, my people the Toorcumuns, who had fled the serpent. But what the bird or bird's feathers could possibly signify, no one could conjecture.

"This," said the Meerza, "is, unless I mistake, the very viper that His Highness Muhummud restored to life. Did you ever hear the story?"

"Never; let me hear it."

"His Highness, peace be to him, was passing in winter over the desert, when he found a small frozen viper. He was touched with compassion, and placed it in his sleeve, where after a while the heat of his blessed body restored it to life. The viper, upon feeling itself perfectly recovered, poked its head from out of the sleeve, and said, 'O prophet, I am about to bite you.'

"'Wherefore,' enquired the prophet, 'have I done you injury?'

"'On the contrary, you have done me good; nevertheless, I'll bite you.'

"'Wherefore? give me a sound reason, and I will be content.'

"'Your people kill my people constantly.'

"'Your people bite my people constantly. The balance between our kindred is even; between you and me it is in my favour, I have done you good.'

"'And, that you may not do me harm, I will bite you.'

"'Do not be so ungrateful.'

"'I will; I have sworn by the Most High God that I will.'

"At that name, the prophet no longer opposed the viper, but bade him bite on, in the name of God. The viper fixed his fangs in the blessed wrist, and the

prophet, shaking him off, would not destroy him ; but put his lips to the wound, and sucking out the venom, spat it on the earth. From these drops, say those Muhummedans who chew tobacco, sprang that wondrous weed, which has the bitterness of the serpent's tooth, quelled by the sweet saliva of the prophet. Therefore, it is allowable to chew pigtail."

"There is but one little objection to this tale," I replied, "which is, that tobacco was first discovered about 900 years after the demise of His Highness Muhummud, in a country which he had never heard of, *i.e.* Yungee Doonia (the new world). The same fact is proof that tobacco is not forbidden by the Koraun, since it was quite unknown to the author of that book. Therefore the Faithful may chew pigtail, Q. E. D."

As all my people are more or less votaries of the weed, either in a solid or a gaseous form, they were well contented with this settlement of a question which still troubles the weak conscience of many a devout tobacco-loving Moslim. Let us look at home, and see if *we* have not scruples as absurd, and infinitely more mischievous, which take the place of that true religion of the heart, which owns neither form nor ceremony, nor any excuse for uncharitableness, rancour, or discord ; but which scruples not to mingle its spirit with whatever is pure and beautiful in the religion of a brother, though prevented, by the fear of misconception, from conforming to any outward ceremonies excepting those of his own people and faith.

Finally, I reached the spot destined for our halt, and, spreading my carpet, and drawing round me my cloak, sat two more hours in the rain, until the camels were announced. A few black tents were at hand,

and from these, in spite of the weather, I enticed several children around me, by means of loaf-sugar. With them came two women, and sat themselves upon the skirt of my carpet, delighted with the sugar. When the camels had arrived, and my tent was pitched, one of them brought me dried horse-dung for fuel, and then a skinful of fresh sheep's milk, villainously flavoured with the aroma of mutton, a common defect, proceeding, perhaps, from some want of care and cleanliness in milking; camel's milk is far preferable; but for tea, commend me to fresh, frothing goat's milk; mare and camel's milk are preferred by the Toorcumuns. Of the former a fermented liquor is made, which I afterwards tasted in Russia, and to which the Oozbegs are very partial. I, who dislike the effect of fermentation upon liquids, am no judge of its merits.

I had, yesterday, vindicated the liberty of the fair sex; and, in upholding that enjoyed by the Kuzzauks, had appealed to the virtue of the daughters of my people as an example. The evening did not pass, ere I found reason to regret the comparison; for the two fair Kuzzauks made a somewhat over-free use of theirs.

## CHAPTER XX.

Ferocity of Toorcumun Horses—Cliffs of crystallized Lime—  
 Account of the Death of Futteh Khaun, Vuzeer of Heraut—  
 Resistless Power of Destiny—The Falcon and the Crow—  
 Perverseness of Guide—Tent of Dāna Bae, the Kuzzauk—  
 The Napkin of Khaurism—The Desert Bird.

APRIL 8th.—Hussun Mhatoor, coming to me this morning, as we were preparing to start, proposed leaving the Yuze Baushie and his party to follow at leisure, whilst he himself rode on with me. To the first proposition I agreed, but objected to the second; for he had the day before left me outside a Kuzzauk tent, exposed for two hours to the rain, whilst he entered to plunder it. I insisted, therefore, upon having a guide to ride on with me on such occasions, as I could not sanction, by my presence, his depredations.

Meanwhile, a most unpleasant commotion had arisen amongst the horses of my suite. The presence of a gelding, ridden by the Kuzzauk guide, had made them all furious. They broke from their pickets, and attacked one another with teeth and hoofs, so violently that we had the utmost difficulty in separating them, and not until they had several times

rolled together upon the earth, and Ali Muhummud's horse had been lamed and otherwise wounded. Yet these animals, when neither mare nor gelding is brought near them, are the most quiet and tractable of creatures, travelling in very compact bodies, without either kicking or biting.

We descended into a wide valley, scarped with lofty cliffs of shell limestone, marl, and crystallized lime. Nizaum here discovered that he had dropped my silver drinking-cup, and rode back with Summud Khaun to find it. We sat at the foot of a cliff. Large masses of crystallized carbonate of lime had rolled down from above. The weather, acting upon these, moulded them into figures of great beauty, and a surface yielding all the prismatic colours. The masses were often cubes of a foot. I selected a few of the smaller specimens.

My servants now joined me, having found the silver goblet in the road. Summud Khaun, who had been much about the person of Shauh Kaumraun, gave me the following particulars of the death of the Vuzeer, Futteh Khaun. It is a characteristic page of Eastern history.

Futteh Khaun, Vuzeer of Shah Maimood of Cabul, was sent to the aid of the king's brother, Hajji Feeroozooddeen, viceroy of Heraut, who was threatened with invasion by Persia. He was kindly treated by the viceroy; and, on the third day, getting possession of the gates of Heraut, seized upon the government in the name of Maimood's son, the prince Kaumraun. Hajji Feerooz fled to the hills, where, during five days, he had nothing to eat but grass and the roots of wild herbs. He then descended to the valley, and sought refuge in the cottage of a husbandman, who at once



recognised him and treated him kindly. From this cottage he rode upon a bullock to a neighbouring place of pilgrimage, where he thought he should be more secure.

The prince Kaumraun, hearing that Heraut had been seized in his name, hastened to take possession, announcing his arrival in the neighbourhood to the Vuzeer Futteh Khaun: but the latter, perceiving the sweets of supreme authority, seemed in no hurry to vacate the throne.

From the hour of Kaumraun's arrival, jealousy and distrust were visible. An impression prevailed amongst the followers of either, that each had designs upon the liberty of the other. Three days had elapsed, and Futteh Khaun had not called to pay his respects to his prince. Shah Pussund Khaun (at present chief of Laush) determined to call upon Futteh Khaun, and sound his disposition. The prince Kaumraun consented, with reluctance, to this step, fearing that his friend might be seized. Shah Pussund Khaun, with a handsome suite, waited upon Futteh Khaun, and was received with all appearance of cordiality. Their attendants were dismissed, whilst they held secret consultation. A copy of the Koraun was produced, and each swore solemnly upon it. Futteh Khaun, that he would warn Shah Pussund Khaun of any intention, on his own part, to seize the prince; and Shah Pussund Khaun, that he would warn Futteh Khaun of any intention of the prince to seize him. Futteh Khaun then gave very handsome presents and dresses of honour to Shah Pussund Khaun, and all his suite; and so they parted.

Next day, Futteh Khaun waited upon prince Kaumraun. The prince treated him with the utmost

affection and distinction, and lavished rich presents upon him. A few days afterwards he called again, and received still greater marks of favour. Futteh Khaun, himself the most treacherous of mortals, might have been warned by such a profusion of cordiality of his impending fate. The prince, taking from his own side a remarkably costly dagger, placed it in the girdle of Futteh Khaun, and bade him take command of an expedition against Meshed; Futteh Khaun prepared himself accordingly, pitching his camp upon the spot since occupied by the Persian army of investment.

He then waited upon the prince to take leave. Those who have visited the dwellings of kings and nobles in Asia, are acquainted with the variety of contrivances by which a visitor is separated from any effectual aid of his followers, in approaching the lion's den. The narrow, dark passages, often lined on either side with armed men, through whom he has to squeeze his way. The narrow, precipitous staircases, terminating above in a pigeon-hole, which is crept through almost on all-fours, so that an old woman may master the visitor ere he can stand upright,—all these approaches place *him*, who is obliged to pay his homage at Court, completely in the power of the monarch; and the failure of such homage leaves no doubt as to the nature of the subject's views. Futteh Khaun, throughout the whole of these manœuvres, betrayed the grossest inattention to the signs of the times, and the most deplorable obliviousness of the nature of the game he was playing.

On this occasion, instead of finding the prince in open Durbar, to which he could bring his followers, he was admitted, as a particular mark of confidence,

to the prince's inner apartment, which was to be attained by ascending a narrow flight of stairs; as he was stooping to pass through the door above, he was seized from both sides at the same instant, pinioned, and thrown upon his back. Red-hot irons were instantly brought, and his eye-balls were seared. It is probable, that Kaumraun, having no longer cause to fear him, would have been content with this punishment, or rather precaution. But Futteh Khaun had been a reckless character, guilty of much violence, and his blood was demanded on all sides, by the relatives of those he had wronged. Kaumraun, not yet established in his government, dared not disgust so many, and yielded to their demands. Futteh Khaun was, therefore, brought into a tent, pitched between Heraut and the river, in which sat a circle of his mortal foes.

They commenced, by each in turn accusing him of the injuries received at his hand, and heaping upon him the most opprobrious epithets. Uttah Muhummud Khaun then stepped up to him, and seizing one of his ears, cut it off with his knife, saying, this is for such and such an injury, done to such an one of my relatives. Shahaghaussie Nuwaub cut off the other ear. Each, as he wreaked this unmanly vengeance upon the victim, whom he would have crouched to the day before, named the wrong of which it was the recompense; thus depriving him of the highest consolation the mind of man can possess under torment—the conscience void of offence. Another of the barbarians cut off his nose; Khana Moolla Khaun severed his right hand; Khalook Dâd Khaun his left hand. The blood gushing copiously from each fresh wound. Summundur Khaun cut off his beard,

saying, "This is for dishonouring my wife." Hitherto, the high-spirited chief had borne his suffering without either weakness or any ebullition of his excitable temper. He had only once condescended, in a calm voice, to beg them to hasten his death. The mutilation of ears and nose, a punishment reserved for the meanest offences of slaves, had not been able to shake his fortitude; but the beard of a Muhummedan is a member so sacred, that honour itself becomes confounded with it; and he, who had borne with the constancy of a hero, the taunts and tortures heaped upon him, seemed to lose his manhood with his beard, and burst into a passion of tears. His torments were now drawing to a close. Gool Muhummud Khaun, with a blow of his sabre, cut off his right foot, and a man of the Populzye tribe severed the left. Uttah Muhummud Khaun finished his torments by cutting his throat.

Such was the end of one of the most talented and extraordinary characters of Eastern history. He may be considered a type of his countrymen, exhibiting traits, more strongly developed, indeed, in his own instance, yet common to all Afghauns. The courage, the talent, the fickleness and inconstancy, the occasional generosity, the unscrupulous treachery, the genius to conceive, the promptitude to perform; disconcerted by a want of system, by an inability to resist tempting opportunities, diverting him from the end of his enterprise. If we consider his moral character, it is not perhaps much fairer than that of other Afghauns who have enjoyed power, or rather been cursed with opportunity to do evil. But his foes, by their barbarous and cowardly revenge, have blotted from our memory all that was damning in

the page ; and left us only his brilliant and versatile talents and powers, sealed in his last moments by the courage and constancy of a hero.

I inquired, whether, at his seizure, he had not made resistance, as might be expected from so energetic a character.

“No, Sir ; when a man’s death is decreed, he is powerless to struggle against destiny. Futteh Khaun had in his girdle a brace of detonating pistols and a dagger. Yet he made no attempt to use either.”

“It is surprising that one so conversant with peril, so prompt, and courageous, should not have struck one blow.”

“It was not the will of fate. I remember when Hajji Feeroozooddeen endeavoured to cut down three unarmed prisoners who were brought before him. His weapon was a Damascus blade of great price, keen as a razor, and capable of severing iron ; but it was not the will of heaven that it should harm those men ; and, after several vain efforts, he threw away his beautiful blade in anger, and desired that it might never again be brought into his sight.”

The Meerza soon after related a fable, which is probably not very new. A falcon soaring over a tree in which a crow was cawing, was struck with the music of the notes, and immediately desired to cement an alliance. This continued for some time, until the falcon, returning one night from an unsuccessful foray, sat down hungry and out of humour near the crow. “Vuzeer,” he at length exclaimed, in a voice of thunder, “how is it that you presume to sit at your ease in the pleasant sunshine, whilst I am standing here in the dark ?”

“O king,” replied the poor crow, “your gracious

Majesty mistakes ; it is night, and darkness is around us both."

"What! you miserable reptile, do you presume to make *me* a liar?" And falling upon the poor crow, he ate him up with much relish.

We now emerged from the valley upon a high plain, and saw on our right, in the distance, the double summit of a dark hill, or Kara Daugh, at which, so far as we can understand, lies Dahsh Gullah (the stone fort), the Russian settlement on the coast of the Caspian. A long, low, black line of clouds on the north traced out the course of the sea, of which we are entering one of the promontories. We encamped near some Kuzzauk tents.

April 9th, 1840.—Starting as usual, we soon reached a valley, in which we found several copious wells, surrounded by flocks of Kuzzauk sheep. Two Kuzzauks were watering them. A third good-naturedly watered our horses in a trough of Russian manufacture. The valley was scarred by innumerable impressions of wells which have fallen in. We afterwards descended into a wide and deep valley, scarped with cliffs of very rotten sandstone ; and passing up one of its narrow tributary ravines, watered our horses at the highest of a long chain of wells. The water was very pure. Snow was lying in the shadow of the cliffs. Emerging from the valley, we encamped for the night upon a high unsheltered plain, ill-supplied with the coarse herbage of the steppe. The wind all day had been excessively bleak, attended with drizzling rain from the inlet of the Caspian on our north, and we have had no night so comfortless as the last.

April 10th.—The morning was bleak and foggy.