

We lost our road, perhaps intentionally on Hussun's part, as he wished to breakfast at the expense of the Kuzzauks. Accordingly, he inquired of some men tending a large herd of galloways, the way to the nearest tent. At this we were hospitably received by Dāna Bae (pronounced Boy), the master. On entering the black tent, I found four or five women still within it, the men having vacated it for me. The eldest woman took both my hands between her own. I went forward, and met rather a pretty girl of fifteen years, who seemed half shy of the salute, but returned it when I put out my hands. We were soon seated, the women still remaining. I felt quite in my element in this rustic household. A screen of reeds on one side hid a flock of young kids and lambs, some of which, however, contrived to extricate their heads or noses, and see what was going on.

Hussun Mhatoor asked, whether he should allow them to kill us a sheep. I objected. He said they were pressing it upon me, and that he should like to taste it. I thought it better to give my consent, determining to remunerate the good people. All the matrons wore the dirty white cloth, elsewhere described as their head-dress; but the two maidens had the Kuzzauk bonnet of inverted fur, which, like all small bonnets, is becoming to the face. Their hair was braided in rich and heavy tresses, partly concealed by the bonnet. I gazed upon them with much interest. Observing a tall and rather handsome young man standing behind the master of the tent, I was struck with their mutual resemblance, and asked, if they were not father and son. The old man was evidently gratified by the discovery, and with some reason, for he is himself an ugly little fellow. The

family have better features than the generality of Kuzzauks, and no Tartar peculiarities. The second daughter is decidedly a pretty girl, and the elder is not ill-looking. The bonnet of black lambskin, shadowing the wild and prominent features and restless eyes of the young man, gave him a romantic air. Nevertheless, his was not a prepossessing countenance, and the old man's expression was that of one of the meaner of the Jewish race. These men were destined to exercise over my fortunes an influence which I could not foresee.

A large, hemispherical, cast-iron cauldron, was now placed over the fire, and a sheep was led to the door to shew its face : a ceremony that quite unfitted me for the banquet. Summud Khaun objected to the food being dressed before me, and Nizaum was called to dress it after my own fashion ; but I replied, that the friends who had provided the entertainment must complete their kindness by preparing it. Whilst it was in preparation, the old man asked for some tobacco, a weed with which travellers in these parts should be provided. Hussun gave him a piece, and our Kuzzauk guide volunteered to pound it into snuff. Seizing a wooden goblet, and the handle of a spade, as pestle and mortar, he commenced accordingly. The root of some wild plant was reduced to ashes and cast amongst the tobacco leaves, probably to assist granulation. The pounder filled his mouth with water, which, from time to time he spurted in. Whether the product was Prince's mixture, or Black-guard, I will not take upon me to say. I observed that all articles of furniture were Russian, either of cast iron or of wood turned upon a lathe.

The food was now brought in, upon a dozen

wooden bowls, or platters, and placed before us. It consisted of boiled mutton, soused in its own soup. Bread and vegetables are things quite unknown in these parts. Kuzzauks are exclusively carnivorous. The whole party fell on, like a pack of wolves; my own stomach, weakened by sight of the victim's face, was quite turned by the scene before me. Never did I see so much flesh devoured in so brief a space. Yet I have witnessed the feasts of tigers and wolves. The father and son would not partake until the guests had concluded, although I entreated them to do so. The women did not appear until chins had done wagging; but two of the senoras entered, afterwards, to serve out curdled milk (mahss) in large bowls. The broth of the mutton, also, was brought in and distributed, being swigged as if it had been beer. The bowls were handed to the women, who scraped them clean with their thumbs, then plunged those members into their mouths, and again into the bowls, with a rapidity truly admirable. The thumb and tongue are the only napkins in Khaurism—water is never thrown away upon either bowl or person. The Tartars are right not to eat with their women. Imagine a pretty girl, with a sheep's head in both her lily hands, tearing off the scalp, picking out the eyes by the insertion of her fore-finger, cracking them between her teeth, like gooseberries, thrusting the same pretty finger in after the brain, and sucking away at the apertures. All which I saw executed by one of the men, in a most natural and edifying manner.

Summud Khaun, who, being steward, and knowing what is good, has generally several pounds of sugar and other sweetmeats in his breeches pockets,

greatly delighted the party by distributing them. I singled out the prettier of the maidens, and made her blush, as I presented her a lump of loaf sugar. We rose and took leave. I met a grandson of Dāna Bae, carrying an empty bowl. Into this I slipped four rupees, rather more than the ordinary price of a sheep. The old man followed me to my horse, and shook hands cordially with me. He seemed to have expected some gift; but I felt delicacy in paying him, in person, for his hospitality. We proceeded, but could not find our camels; we therefore made across the country for a Khail, where we obtained direction, and overtaking them, encamped in a valley, near a wall of loose stones, of semicircular form, piled up by travellers as a screen from the north-east wind. While I was sitting waiting for the complete preparation of my tent, one of the camel-drivers brought me a little bird, resembling the water-wagtail; one of the rare inhabitants of the steppe which, by a homeless, friendless wanderer like myself, had ever been regarded with peculiar tenderness. He had injured the poor little thing in catching it; and grinned as he gave it wounded, and half dead from fear, into my hand. I rebuked him harshly for his inhospitality, and placed the little bird in a hollow in the loose wall, where it was tolerably secure; at night, when my candle was lighted, it hopped in, and took its seat near the foot of my bed. I was touched with the incident, and disposed my baggage so as to shelter it from accidental injury. None but he who has been similarly circumstanced, can conjecture the hold which the little thing had taken upon my heart. In the morning, my first care was to attend to my wounded guest. I found it lying

dead in the spot where it had slept. I dug it a little grave, and buried it there. My servants tried in vain to make this incident into a fulfilment of part the second of Ali's dream. The bird had indeed risen, as it were, from the dead serpent, and had been destroyed, but not by my hand, which would gladly have saved it. Incidents, trifling as this may seem, affect the tone of our feelings, and I was melancholy on the death of the little desert bird.

CHAPTER XXI.

Cliffs of Shell Sandstone—Burial Ground—First Glimpse of Caspian—Difficulties suggested by the Guide—Entire Absence of Boats—Desperate Posture of my Affairs—Expedient suggested by the Guide—His Refusal to accompany me farther—Prospect of utter Ruin—Alternatives—Basin and Cliffs of the Caspian—False Report of Sails in sight—Signals—Resolution to proceed to Dahsh Gullah—Repetition of Signals—Their Fruitlessness—Appearance of Dāna Bae, the Kuzzauk—His Agreement to conduct me—Announcement and Departure—Letter to the Khaun Huzurut—Suspicious Circumstance—Ruinous Habits of my Interpreter.

APRIL 10th.—The reports I received, from time to time, from Kuzzauks, made me very anxious. One declared, that no vessels had, this season, appeared off the port, and that none ever came, without express licence, from Astrakhaun. Another man assured me he had seen a large fleet, about twelve days ago; that they sailed close to the promontory, as if in search of caravans from Bokhara, and, after lingering for some space, returned to the neighbouring island; but, since the destruction of the Russian fleet by the Toorcumuns, I fear that all boats will be excessively wary in approaching this coast.

After marching about ten miles, I reached a cliff of shell sandstone, resting on chalk. This, in past days, has been rudely fortified, and, so far as I can learn, was occupied by a very extensive camp of

Calmauks. Some miles farther, in a sheltered nook, where the furious and bleak north wind, that has met us all day in the teeth, is scarcely heard, I found a considerable cemetery of the Salars, Chowdhoors, and Kuzzauks. The headstones are of chalk, and of soft sandstone. The former carved with some elegance, and inscribed in Persian characters. I read one or two of the inscriptions, which proved to be genealogical rolls, sometimes running up seven or eight descents. There was some resemblance between these tombstones and those of Europe. A building, which had once been rudely domed, enclosed the circle of rest of some chieftain; but the monumental portion was gone. Another Goombuz, or domed building, stood on the height, at hand. Such objects are curious only to the wanderer of the steppe. A few miserable mulberry trees, out of leaf, had contrived to spring here, the first trees we had seen for thirty days. The spot was sheltered, and well chosen. We, who had just emerged from the cutting and blustering wind, felt it to be a place of rest.

Emerging from this valley, we traversed a high plain, covered, like the rest of the steppe, with a low growth of wormwood, amongst which some scattered blades of grass appeared. From Shawl to Orenburgh, a distance of some 2,000 miles, the country is a wormwood-covered waste, broken only by an occasional chain of mountains. The plain we had entered was well sprinkled with black tents and large flocks of sheep; near one of these tents we halted for the night. Once I caught a glimpse of the blue Caspian, about twenty miles away on the south.

April 12th.—I was now close to that Caspian, so long and earnestly desired, which had seemed to

recede from me in proportion as I advanced. The rich Kuzzauk, whose tent was at hand, sold me a sheep, which was a welcome addition to our almost exhausted supplies. I sent for Hussun Mhatoor, and desired him to find for me some camping ground upon the brink of the sea. He said that the Russians frequently land there, and massacre all whom they meet; that he dared not encamp there, and that if I was determined upon it, he must separate from me, and could afford me no protection; that he would choose for me the nearest safe neighbourhood to the landing-place, and that I could ride thence as often as I pleased to visit the coast. To separate from Hussun, I knew to be destruction, so I was obliged to comply with a measure to which I was extremely averse. At the distance, therefore, of three miles from the Caspian, I occupied a spot selected by Hussun, and, leaving there my baggage, rode with him and a few of my suite to the landing-place. We proceeded over a high, irregular plain, and at length came in sight of the wide expanse of blue waters, from the edge of a cliff of some 500 feet.

I cast my eye over the waste of waters, and perused most anxiously the line of coast, but not a vessel was in sight. Again and again I explored the long-desired Caspian, and again my eye, wearied and worn out, rested in despair from its wandering.* That gaze was one of the most disheartening, the most appalling, my eye had ever known. I inquired of Hussun what method merchants adopted to advertise the Russian vessels of their arrival. He replied that in general

* The loss of my telescope, which I had been obliged to present to the Khaun Huzurut for want of proper gifts, was now keenly felt, the distances being far too remote for the naked eye.

there was no want of boats lying off-shore, but that the burning of the Russian fleet at present deterred them from approaching, and might prevent their visiting the coast at all. I reminded him of the assurance he had made me, in presence of the Khaun Huzurut, that I should find abundance of vessels, and no difficulty whatever in embarking, and of his offer to supply me with the use of his own boat. He denied having made this offer with the utmost effrontery: said that there was an island about five hours' sail from shore, at which there were always vessels. He recommended me to sell my horses, and purchase a boat and two Russian slaves to man it; to embark in this boat for the island, and there procure a vessel for the conveyance of my suite and baggage to Astrakhaun. This was truly a promising expedient. The sale of my horses would have rendered it impossible for me to return to Khiva, or to proceed to Dahsh Gullah, the Russian fort, should I fail to procure a vessel. Nor was this all; for I was so ill provided with cash, that I depended upon the sale of my horses for the means of prosecuting my journey, and could not afford to part with them for the mere use of a boat for a single day. Neither could I venture to quit the coast without my servants, as any plausible report of my departure would have been seized by Hussun as a plea for plundering my goods, and selling my people as slaves, or the governor of the island might detain me, when *their* destruction would be certain. I therefore declined this offer, and told him that, if next day no vessel should arrive, I must proceed, as the Khaun Huzurut had desired, to Dahsh Gullah.

“And who will conduct you?” he replied.



"You of course will, according to the Khaun Huzurut's instructions."

"The Khaun gave me no such instructions; he ordered me to conduct you hither, and I have done so. If you like to wait here for a vessel, I will remain with you; or, if you prefer returning to Khiva, I will be your guide, but I will not go a step *farther* with you."

"Then you must find me a guide."

"No; I have no orders to do so."

"Then I will go alone; and if any evil befall the Khaun Huzurut's ambassador, he will visit it upon you and your family."

"What do *I* care for the Khaun Huzurut?" was his reply.

I begged all present to mark the words he was uttering. Three or four Kuzzauks and Toorcumuns, for whom my speech was translated, grinned at the appeal. Hussun was alarmed, for had it reached the Khaun's ears, the whole of his family had been instantly extirpated. He qualified his words, therefore, by adding, "I have done the Khaun Huzurut too good service, to have anything to fear from him."

I then appealed to the Toorcumuns and Kuzzauks present, Ali Muhummud interpreting after me. "I take you all to witness, that I have required Hussun Mhatoor's guidance to Dahsh Gullah, according to the desire of the Khaun Huzurut, signified to me in the presence of Summud Khaun and Hussun Mhatoor himself. Summud Khaun, what were the Khaun Huzurut's instructions?"

"The Khaun Huzurut asked you what you would do, in case no boat were procurable at Mungh Kishlauk. You replied that you would go on to Dahsh

Gullah. The Khaun Huzurut said, 'Do so.' All this I heard. The Khaun Huzurut added, 'Hussun Mhatoor cannot accompany you into the fort, but will bring you within sight of it.'"

"You all hear this. Now I take you to witness, that Hussun Mhatoor refuses to guide me himself or to furnish me a proper guide, although he knows that the Khaun Huzurut's interests are at stake."

Hussun Mhatoor gave me a surly look in reply, and rode off, leaving me to my reflections.

These were sufficiently appalling. Before me was the sea, without a vessel; behind and around me was the desert, inhabited by Audum Khors (as they are called), men-eaters. My food and forage were reduced to ten days' supply; neither grain nor forage was procurable at a nearer distance than four hundred and fifty miles. My guide and sole protector was the greatest robber in Khaurism, who was on the watch for some plausible pretext to plunder and destroy me. For this, a single unwary step of mine would be sufficient; or, failing that, it was easy for the chief of 60,000 cannibals, whose power in this district rendered him almost independent of his sovereign, to procure false evidence, that I had quitted his guidance, under circumstances that freed him from all responsibility. To separate from him, promised destruction. To remain, even a few days here, would render advance and retreat, alike impossible. To return to Khiva, was worse than death; it was dishonour. The alternatives, therefore, were either to wait here, hoping for the appearance of a boat, or proceed, at all hazards, towards Dahsh Gullah. Now, even should boats arrive, I was not certain they would receive me. The Government of Russia is so jealous, that I was

inclined to believe the assertion of one of the Kuzzauks, that no captain would venture to receive me, without express permission from the governor of Astrakhaun. With money, indeed, I might have bribed them to the risk: but my purse was nearly exhausted. The chances, then, should I remain, were that I should be disappointed of a passage; and, my supplies being exhausted, should be obliged to make over my horses and property, item by item, to Hussun Mhatoor, in exchange for the merest necessaries of life. Already, he had contrived to quadruple, around me, the price of such articles of food as the Kuzzauks would sell. The price would, of course, rise with our necessities, until a draught of curds would be exchanged for a horse or a sabre. I believe, that in order to ensure such a result, he would not hesitate to warn off Russian vessels from the coast, and place me under suspicion with the captains. The end of this seemed to be, that we must sell ourselves as slaves, and pass the rest of our days as Kuzzauk shepherds.

The alternative was to proceed, at once, towards Dahsh Gullah; and as Hussun was determined not to accompany me, to procure, if possible, another guide. I called Ali Muhummud, the only counsellor I had in this emergency, being the only one possessed of any information regarding the habits of the people of Khaurism. He would try to procure a Kuzzauk guide, he said, and thought that the Kuzzauks of those parts were too strong to be in awe of the Toorcumuns, and that they could protect us. He considered them a better and more honourable race, than either Oozbeg or Toorcumun. I objected to the first part of his proposition, inasmuch as we had seen

Hussun plunder the Kuzzauks at his pleasure. He replied, that those were poor and weak individuals. That, if we could procure the guidance of a man of wealth or consequence, he thought we should be secure. I did not feel convinced by his arguments ; but this alternative was cheered with a ray of hope, which the others wanted ; so I bade him use his utmost endeavours to procure such a guide.

Meanwhile, the sea was before me — an object longed for, during an exile of seventeen years ; an object of affection, almost of reverence, to the children of the Isles. The storm was gathering blacker and blacker over my head. I perceived that the future had few sunny hours for me, and I determined to enjoy the moment ; and as, in my light European attire, (which I had put on, in the prospect of meeting Russians,) I bounded down the cliff, I felt my spirits rise, and determined to submit my soul as little as possible to the dominion of desolating care. I first, however, despatched Ali on horseback, to a spit of sand, projecting about a mile into the sea, with instructions to load his horse with grass and dry weeds on the road, and light a fire at the extreme point. Such, he had heard, was the usual signal made by the Bokhara caravans.

The cliff I was descending, could not be less than five hundred * feet high ; it was of chalk, marl, and shell limestone. The basin of the Caspian, I found here, to be a clean wave-worn vase of the same shell limestone, precisely similar in texture and contents, to the limestone I had found throughout the steppe. I examined, all along the shore, the shells thrown up by the waves. They were of three kinds only : the

* See note on next page.

cockle, the mussel, and the spirorbis. Precisely the same shells, and no others, are found in the shell limestone from the neighbourhood of Khiva to the shores of the Caspian, sometimes elevated, by my estimate, more than one thousand feet* above the level of this sea. Here, then, is a proof, that this tableland has once formed the basin of the Caspian; though how elevated, or why deserted, remains a mystery. All other seas produce a greater variety of shells; and therefore, when the shell limestone in question was formed, the Caspian must have been, as now, a lake dissevered from the ocean, although, possibly, connected with the Euxine sea. †

I found the water very salt, but not bitter. It was clear as crystal. Its colour, in the distance, is a very delicate and liquid blue. Gazing from the cliff, towards the island of Koulali, I had perceived the white line of ice, which girdled it on the 12th of April. But I was now at the foot of the cliff, amongst huge masses of shell limestone, watching the crystal waves, as they dashed themselves against this iron binding of the shore. I stripped off my clothes, and leaped from a rock into the sea. But the chill of waves, scarcely restored from a solid to a liquid form, almost paralysed me, and I was glad to scramble back to land, and bask for a while in the sun. I spent here an hour, thankful for this respite from my troubles, and then proceeded to reascend the cliff. I was scarcely half way to the summit, when my servants shouted to me in a joyful tone of voice. So

* In the first and second editions I wrote these numbers respectively 700 and 2,000. But I have since had greater experience in calculating heights than I then possessed, and prefer under-estimating them.

† See Appendix.

soon as I could catch their words, I found they were warning me of the appearance of several vessels, close at hand. I turned to the sea; but it was just as before, an unbroken expanse of blue. I therefore hastened to the summit, and inquired of my people the cause of their shouts. "Oh," they replied, "the ships have arrived. Maimood was the first to see them. There, Sir, there," pointing down to the spit of sand, where Ali and his fire were barely distinguishable, and where the breakers, curled by a fresh breeze from the west, were hurling themselves in foam upon the sand. "Now don't you see them, Sir?"

I looked over the waters in vain, now to the coast, now to the horizon; at length, after much interrogation, I discovered that the breakers were mistaken by my people for the white sails I had bade them search for. As they now saw the sea for the first time in their lives, they had begged me to explain to them what a ship was like. I told them, they would see a dark speck upon the waters, surmounted by a little pyramid of snow. And, as snow had suddenly appeared, where none had previously been, and the natives of the inland countries of Asia have a shrewd suspicion that our vessels travel under water, like fish; it was not very surprising, that honest Maimood, the groom, should have fallen into the error. I was less disappointed, at discovering the nature of the new arrivals, than in perceiving how poor a figure Ali and his fire cut, even at this small distance. The strong wind from the sea prevented the smoke from rising in a column, whilst the flame must be buried in the convexity of the earth's surface. That, at twenty miles distance, such a signal should be visible, seemed quite out of the question.

We spent the rest of the day upon the most conspicuous point of the promontory, and erected a flag, viz., Ali's spear, surmounted by a white muslin turban, spread out to the winds. There was just a possibility, that ourselves, the horses, and the flag might be discoverable, by aid of telescopes, from the island. Toward evening, I recalled Ali from his watch-fire, and we rode back slowly to our bivouac. I endeavoured, on the road, to organize means of securing some Kuzzauk guide in my interests, and the rest of the evening was spent at my tent in discussing the probable result of any measure I might decide upon. The case was sufficiently grave; but we helped it out with a little merriment, as each selected the part he was to play in Kuzzauk land, should we sink to the condition of slaves. We endeavoured to flatter ourselves with the hope, that Kojeh Muhumud, the eldest son of Hussun, a young man highly extolled by report, and one who openly expressed abhorrence of his father's villainy, might join us here. Could we have ascertained the exact position of his tent, I should have made for it at once; but the Toorcumuns in our company could, or would, give us no information upon the subject. Indeed, it is probable, that they were ignorant of the present locality of a tent, which had been wandering whilst they were absent.

Two short marches back I had learned, that Dahsh Gullah was distant two short marches for a horseman. It, therefore, could scarcely be farther from Mungh Kishlauk than three days' journey for a horseman, or five for laden camels. Several persons on the spot confirmed this calculation; and I fancied the hill had been pointed out to me, beneath which the fort

lies. Excepting Summud Khaun, all my followers were sanguine that we could make this distance without much hazard, could we secure the guidance of some trustworthy Kuzzauk. Ali Muhummud was especially confident. When I objected, that Hussun Mhatoor could raise thousands of horsemen to follow and attack us, he replied, "Openly he dare not attack us, for fear of the Khaun Huzurut; and during the three or four days of our march we will never be out of the saddle, nor off our guard for a moment."

As this was my sole resource, I was glad to see even one of my people in such good heart, and would not damp his confidence, but I confess I regarded the enterprise in a far more desperate light; for I knew, that Hussun's influence in those parts was sufficient to enable him to dog our steps with thousands of Toorcumuns; or, if he feared employing his own tribe, with Kuzzauks of the country; and I had but four fighting men, including myself; if, indeed, I could venture to calculate as fighting men mere domestics, who had never seen the gleam of more deadly steel than the metal of a carving-knife.

The next morning, 13th, I again rode to the cliffs of the Caspian. My principal object in desiring to camp on the shore, was the facility it would afford of kindling beacons at night. I could not do this at present, because Hussun refused to attend, or to send me any of his people: and had I attempted it alone, he would probably have organized some attack upon me, which could plausibly be laid at the door of Russia. Nevertheless, had I intended to remain another day, I should have made the attempt. To do so, with the prospect of departing next day, was

quite useless, as the signal, if observed, could not be answered in time. I renewed the fire at the spit of sand, and again spread my flag upon the most conspicuous summit. The wind blew the smoke violently along the surface of the shore, and I felt that there was no hope of its attracting notice. About the island of Koulali, I could just perceive some sails, or rather vessels, apparantly anchored off this island. One or two others seemed sailing to and from the east, in the direction of Dahsh Gullah. I watched them with an intentness which my desperate position begot.

Once or twice I fancied a vessel was making in the direction of this port ; but hours passed, and my hopes were for ever dispelled. Nevertheless, I continued anxiously to watch them until evening, when I rode back to camp, more disheartened than ever, and more than ever convinced of the necessity of hurrying on to Dahsh Gullah, whilst any provisions remained.

On dismounting from my horse, I was greeted by a little Kuzzauk, who seized my hand between his own. His face was familiar, but I did not instantly recognise Dāna Bae, my late entertainer, who had been profuse of offers of service, and whose name I had written in my pocket-book. On entering my tent, Ali Muhummud came and informed me, that he had spoken to Dāna Bae, and found him ready and willing to guide me to Dahsh Gullah. After dinner, I sent for Dāna Bae, who repeated this assurance, saying, that five days would suffice for the journey, and that he would himself furnish me with camels. That he knew the route well, and could ensure my safe passage, but must stop short of Dahsh Gullah,

lest the Russians should molest him. I promised to indemnify him for all loss sustained in my service, and to reward him handsomely. "But," I said, "what will Hussun Mhatoor say to this arrangement? have you nothing to apprehend from him?"

"What has Hussun Mhatoor to do with me?" he replied; "is he my lord?"

"Hussun Mhatoor has great authority in this district; could he not attack you?"

"He dares not. The Kuzzauks here are too strong for him. It will be necessary that you proceed first to my tent, that I may make arrangements, procure camels, etc."

I fixed upon the following day for this movement. I then sent for Hussun Mhatoor, from whom I anticipated some opposition. But he at once proposed it himself; a circumstance that gave me some uneasiness, especially as I afterwards heard that Hussun was in some way connected with Dāna Bae's family. I lay down that night relieved of the most anxious part of a dangerous undertaking—the decision. The plan adopted was full of peril, but it afforded also a glimmer of hope, which I could not view in any other.

The next morning, April 14th, Hussun Mhatoor was sent for, and entered my tent, where, after the ceremony of tea, I thanked him for his escort thus far; regretted that it was here to cease; mentioned how ill-provided I was with the means of rewarding service, but begged him, in token of kindness, to accept the tent in which I was sitting (and which I knew he coveted), and gave him a dress of honour. I then had the camels laden, and proceeded on my journey, accompanied by the old rogue, who hoped

still to get something from me. My servants begged me to satisfy him ere we parted. I asked them whether they had observed the basin of the Caspian. "Yes." "Then fill up that, and I will satisfy Hussun Mhatoor." I would, indeed, have purchased his forbearance at any price, incensed as I was against him. But my circumstances were no secret to him, and I reflected that avarice such as his would only be inflamed by possession. That the more of my property I should bestow upon him, the more he would covet the remainder; and upon the sale of this property, at an immense loss, I depended for defraying my journey to Astrakhaun.

The reader has seen, that I had pledged myself to the Khaun Huzurut, to write His Majesty, and the British Envoy at Heraut, an intimation of my departure from the territories of Khaurism. Hussun Mhatoor had no right to demand this, because my journey still lay through the Khaun's territories. But he would not suffer me to depart without some certificate of his having quitted me, and I had no means of bringing him to reason. I had now no tent, and was dependent upon a cloak of felt for shelter from the weather. We were at this time near a Kuzzauk tent, which the owner was cleaning for my accommodation. It was about seven miles from our late camp. I entered it, and wrote to Major Todd, the British Envoy at Heraut, dictating a letter for the Khaun Huzurut, which my Meerza wrote upon the back of the other, according to the Khaun's particular instructions. In the latter epistle, I stated, that owing to the great delay experienced on the road, the Russian vessels had visited, and again quitted, Mungh Kishlauk. That, through the same

delay, the fifty days' provisions I had taken, for a march of sixteen days, were nearly exhausted; so that I could not linger at Mungh Kishlauk, on the chance of getting a vessel, but was hastening, according to His Majesty's orders, toward Dahsh Gullah. That Hussun Mhatoor would conduct me no farther, but had furnished me with a Kuzzauk guide, etc. etc. etc. The old Meerza was so nervous in the presence of Hussun Mhatoor, that he but imperfectly expressed what I dictated. I, of course, did not venture to state, the extent of Hussun's misconduct, in a letter which he was to carry. I sealed and delivered this letter to Hussun; and as evening was fast falling, walked forth to look at the flocks, assembling for the night around the tents. All the young lambs and kids, of which there were about one hundred, were tied neck by neck, in a spot apart from their dams. Each, in turn, was allowed a swig at its mother's teat, and afterwards withdrawn. The quantity seemed to me insufficient for the nourishment of the young. In the day time, the stronger and older of these kids form a separate flock, attended by one of the children of the family; and being of every pretty colour, look very beautiful, browsing upon the sides of the ravines. The sheep of Tartary is as tall, perhaps taller, than the common English breed, but shorter in the body. It is the Doombha, or large-tailed sheep, common throughout Central Asia. The tail is a huge sack of fat, in two lobes, growing at times to an enormous bulk. And this fat is a delicious marrow. When the army of the Indus entered Candahar, the Europeans, unaccustomed to anything so delicate, ate too freely of it, and many lives were in consequence lost. The fat was found congested in their bowels.

The natives of the country, accustomed to it, eat it without restraining their appetite. Being the only oil possessed by the Kuzzauks, it is very valuable to them.

It may be believed, that with so many causes of anxiety, surrounded by men, plunderers from habit, whose language I did not understand, my eyes were sharpened to scrutinize keenly the countenances and gestures of those with whom I had to deal. Some of Hussun Mhatoor's Toorcumuns, who, heretofore, had seldom ventured to approach me, were now thrusting their heads into the tent, pointing at articles of my property, and gazing upon them as if already in their clutches. All this added nothing to my sense of security. I pointed it out to my people, wishing them to use all their faculties of observation, in order to get timely warning of any treacherous attempt. But there was a supineness about them all, from which nothing could awaken them. I was, therefore, thrown upon my own resources, and could I have spoken the language of the country, these might have been sufficient. As it was, though I watched whilst my people slept, and endeavoured by day to multiply my presence and my observation; this incessant anxiety and wakefulness, and care, served but to defer the evil for a while. I passed that night in the Kuzzauk tent, and the ensuing morning took leave of Hussun Mhatoor, who blessed me very devoutly, even as the jolly priest, in Hogarth's "Gate of Calais," blesseth the English sirloin of beef. I then started, in company with Dāna Bae, the Kuzzauk, for Dahsh Gullah.

CHAPTER XXII.

The Treacherous Messenger—Perplexities—Resolution to return—How altered—Further Symptoms of Treachery—Appearance of a Clump of Toorcumun Horse—Bivouac in the Rain—Symptoms of Treachery in the Guide—Fresh Perplexities and Difficulties—Reach a Kuzzauk Tent—The Kuzzauk Bride—The Hyæna—Reach Dāna Bae's Tent—Interchange of Spoons—Arrangements for the Journey—Greed of Dāna Bae—His formidable Oath—Dismissal of the Hyæna—Night in a Kuzzauk Tent—Journey resumed—Incessant Anxiety and Watchfulness—Arrive at a Chain of Mountains—The Black Russian Ambassador—Singular Weather-worn Rocks—Fresh Causes of Suspicion—Reach the Caspian.

APRIL 15th. — We had proceeded upon our journey about nine miles, hoping that evening to reach Dāna Bae's tent, when we heard loud shouts in our rear, and soon after a hideous Kuzzauk, clad in the skin of a bay horse, hair outward, and having a bonnet of black inverted sheepskin, rode up, vociferating loudly his injunction to us, to turn; for that a fleet of ten Russian vessels had just arrived, and anchored off shore. "Did you not hear their guns?" he said; "you must be deaf not to have heard them." The air and aspect of this man were singularly suspicious. His tale was in the highest degree improbable; and yet, far too important to be neglected. I called him to my bridle, and inquired who sent him.

"No one sent me; I was wandering along the

shore, when I saw ten ships approach and anchor close to the beach."

"What is Hussun Mhatoor's advice?"

"I have not seen Hussun Mhatoor. I know nothing of him. You must come back, or you will miss the ships. They saw your signal from the island."

He spoke with a great deal too much vehemence to be speaking truth, and his mission was exactly what might be expected of Hussun Mhatoor; who, having my letter of dismissal, would now be doubly anxious to detain me, at Mungh Kishlauh, where I should gradually melt into his jaws without his incurring responsibility.

By interrogating separately Dāna Bae and this new comer, and by watching the movements of the latter, I satisfied myself that he was playing me false: but not, until I had actually changed my dress, to ride back and ascertain the truth or falsity of his tale. Once satisfied of this, I determined to press on with all despatch to Dahsh Gullah; hoping to reach that fort, ere Hussun Mhatoor could mature his plans for my ruin.

To my fresh discomfort, I found, on expressing this resolution to Dāna Bae, that he was dissatisfied with it; although had I gone back he would have lost a job, for which I knew him to be most anxious; viz., the carriage of my baggage, and guidance of myself to Dahsh Gullah, for which he was to be handsomely paid. I had, therefore, little doubt, that Hussun had promised him a reasonable share in the plunder. I perceived that matters had become desperate. To return, was certain destruction; to advance seemed to offer this much of hope, that when Dāna

Bae was separated from Hussun and his agents, I might make it better worth his while to serve, than to betray me. I pressed on, accordingly, but was soon overtaken by the Kuzzauk, who vehemently insisted upon my return. I replied, that I would decide upon reaching Dāna Bae's tent. At present, I could give no answer. The reader must not suppose, that the reasoning I have detailed, has been deduced from subsequent experience. It is a faithful transcript of part of what occupied my mind at the moment. To give any idea of the perplexity occasioned by my ignorance of the language at such a crisis, would be utterly impossible; it was to walk blindfold over heated plough-shares.

We proceeded in a drizzling rain, beating upon us under a violent and piercing wind, and adding nothing to the cheerfulness within. On the road, the Kuzzauk entered into many secret and earnest conferences with Dāna Bae; and Ali Muhummud, with his usual inattention, suffered much to escape him. On the road, we passed many Kuzzauks, feeding their flocks of sheep and herds of galloways. With all these, the Kuzzauk had a great deal to say. He took each, in turn, aside, and spoke earnestly to him. I fancied he was urging them to ride back and inform Hussun Mhatoor of my movements.

We continued to advance, and night set in, with continued wind and rain. Dāna Bae had promised that we should reach his tent by sunset, but now he talked of midnight; and, at midnight, we found ourselves upon what he called the ground of his late encampment. It was now but a portion of the desert. I urged the necessity of obtaining shelter for the night. It was not so much on account of the weather

(for that we had often braved) as that I fancied the rude honour of a Kuzzauk would be guarantee for our safety, whilst under his roof. Dāna Bae, accordingly, went over the ground, upon pretence of searching for the mark which is usually set up to denote the direction taken by the late residents. After half an hour, he returned unsuccessful, and said, that we must put up for the night in the open air. We had no alternative; so, covering our goods with felts, and picqueting the horses, and turning loose the camels to graze, I sat down in the mire, back to the wind, and drew over me my cloak as a defence from the rain, which beat upon us all night; my servants, in spite of injunctions to vigilance, were soon asleep under nummuds, and, as I conceived, that such moments were their only intervals of peace, I could not find the heart to disturb them.

I therefore took up my own position sufficiently near theirs for speedy communication; but, at the same time, so as to command the motions of Dāna Bae, the Kuzzauk messenger, and the camel-drivers. The determination of Dāna Bae, that we should not enjoy the protection of his roof, just after the appearance of a body of Toorcumun horse, was suspicious. We had not the slightest reason for believing this to have been his late encampment, but, as I watched his motions throughout the night, I was convinced that his fidelity could not be relied on. Instead of sleeping, he was in close and earnest converse, now with the Kuzzauk, now with the camel-drivers, speaking always in the lowest and most cautious voice, and endeavouring to elude my glance.

April 16th.—Morning at length broke, under the same miserable skies. The earth was ankle deep in

mud, and the rain still poured unceasingly upon us. I directed that the camels should be laden: but their owners, who had all night held conference with the Kuzzauk messenger, refused to suffer it, unless I should promise to return to Mungh Kishlauk. They were even leading away the camels when I arrested them by force. As for my servants, they were utterly useless, pleading that it was vain to struggle with destiny. Had we been left on the steppe without camels, we should have been utterly at the mercy of our betrayers.

After another interval of about two hours, the Kuzzauk returned with Dāna Bae's camels. We laded them, and proceeded toward the latter's tent, the camels and our horses sinking deep in the mire, at every step. Two hours' ride brought us in sight of a Kuzzauk tent, from which sallied a scarlet-faced woman, with a wooden bowl of curdled milk, which she offered me to drink. A little further on, we were received hospitably at some tents, the inhabitants killing and boiling for us a sheep. The rain having somewhat subsided, the natives crowded to the door, and to an opening in the tent, to gaze upon me. One of these was a young bride, having a round red face, grey eyes, and on her head a high obelisk-formed hat, around which was wound the dirty-white cloth, that afterwards, passing under the chin, conceals the throat. The bride seemed to have no objection to admiration, and readily accepted our invitation to enter and take place in the circle, with the husband. The latter did not appear in the least to care for the freedom his wife took. I begged her to allow me to see her head-dress, which is peculiar to brides, and she readily removed the cloth and displayed it. I can

remember only that it was covered with cornelians of all colours, set in silver.

The sheep was now brought, and we sat in a circle to discuss it. It had been boiled as usual, without any accompaniment of vegetable, meal, or bread; my stomach was not yet accustomed to eat flesh from which the warmth of life had not departed; but the others made a hearty meal, especially the Kuzzauk messenger, who, with his two monstrous claws, crammed huge masses of meat into his mouth, and then, taking the solid thigh-bones of the sheep in his hand, twisted off the balls and sockets with his back teeth, and chewed them to powder, which, after sucking, he threw into the fire before us, then, with a strong knife hanging at his girdle, he scooped out the fibrous lining of the bone, which he treated in the same fashion, and, having devoured everything he could lay hands on, began to scrape, with the point of his knife, the tartar from his strong short teeth, wiping the knife upon the upper leather of his boot. He looked so like a hyæna, whilst chewing the large mutton bones, that I pointed out the resemblance to my people, and he has since been known by the title of the Hyæna (Kuftarr).

Having remunerated these good people, I bade them farewell, mounted, and in the evening reached Dāna Bae's tent. The old woman and her two daughters were in the tent when I entered. They saluted me by presenting both hands, which I clasped in mine; my baggage was carried into the tent, my horses were picqueted outside. This tent was a circular area, of about twenty-four feet diameter; one side was occupied by me and by Nizaum, who attended me. On my right was a screen of reeds,

enclosing about twenty young lambs and kids, which thrust out their little heads, and bleated from time to time. On my left sat Dāna Bae, his wife, and daughters. The door was opposite, and, in the centre, a fire, over which stood the hemispherical, cast-iron cauldron, so often alluded to, in which alone is cooked the flesh eaten by Kuzzauks. A sheep was killed; my stores supplied flour and rice, the use of which was evidently known, being occasionally obtained from the Russians. The meal was served up, and I insisted upon all the family attending. Their name was legion, and the scene to me was extremely gratifying, from the number of little faces that thronged in, until the tent seemed bursting with its contents. Just before the dinner came in, Dāna Bae's eldest daughter, a girl of perhaps eighteen years, took down a wooden spoon having a circular bowl, and presented it to me. It was neatly finished, polished, and varnished, the workmanship of Russia, and doubtless a valuable treasure in her eyes. I supposed she had merely intended me to use it at dinner, but her father, who was sitting by, said, "She makes you a present of it, you must keep it for her sake." I pressed the spoon to my lips, and, taking up one of my silver spoons, begged her acceptance of it in exchange; then, seeing her younger sister, a far prettier girl, looking hurt, I made Nizaum get out another of my spoons, and presented it to her. All this was sufficiently absurd, and cuts a bad figure translated into English, but, amongst Kuzzauks one must be a Kuzzauk, and had I asked for a lock of the fair Kuzzauk's hair, in lieu of the spoon, I should have been esteemed a necromancer, who had some design upon the girl's life. It was scarcely possible to persuade

them that the spoons were really silver. They bear my crest and initials, and may perhaps puzzle some future traveller. My drinking goblet was of silver also, and excited great admiration. The Hyæna seizing it, thrust it into his bosom, saying, "This is mine." But it was taken from him, for I was in no mood to gratify one who was plotting my destruction. It had been my purpose to dismiss this man with a dubious message to Hussun Mhatoor, previous to entering with Dāna Bae into any arrangements for my further progress, but nothing could persuade him to leave me.

Dinner having been discussed, and all the bowls, platters, and spoons rendered as clean as the tongues and thumbs of the fair Kuzzauks could make them, I proceeded to arrange with Dāna Bae for the journey; reminding him of his promise, to convey me to Dahsh Gullah in three days from that spot. This he now declared impossible, and demanded eight days. I remonstrated, and argued; but was eventually obliged to agree to make the journey in five days, it being about 150 miles. Then came the terms, in which we found we had to deal with a thoroughbred rogue; for he charged me, for the use of his camels for five days, a sum equivalent to their full value if purchased, besides remuneration to himself and son, for escorting us. In these terms he was inflexible; and although I had no money to spare, I was obliged to acquiesce, upon condition that he would swear solemnly, on the Koraun, to be faithful to me, and convey myself, my people, and goods safely to Dahsh Gullah in five days.

The Meerza's Koraun was accordingly produced from a variety of wrappings and boxes enclosing it.

It was treated with infinite reverence, and handled as if it had been the apple of an eye. Each, ere he passed it from his hands, touched his forehead upon it, and stroking his beard, said, "God is great!" Dāna Bae took it into his hands; and whilst we sat amongst his children and grand-children, beneath the roof of his tent, denounced upon himself and all his relatives the most fearful curses, if he should ever prove false to his solemn oath to be true to us, and to conduct us in safety. He then smeared the Koraun over his forehead, eyes, face, and beard; and my servants seemed to think his fidelity, from that moment, riveted. I was glad to see them in good heart. But I am one of those who think good faith is not to be bound by words or forms of any kind, and that he who would prove traitor to the promise of a glance would not hesitate to infringe the most solemn covenant.

On commencing these discussions, the Hyæna said, "I will not suffer you to go towards Dahsh Gullah. I will arrest you."

"Will you?" I replied, touching significantly the small pistol which I wore in my belt, and looking him in the eyes. He immediately altered his bullying tone, and said, "If I do not, you must give me a present."

I replied, that it was not the English custom to give presents to those who threatened. That if he opposed me in the execution of the Khaun Huzurut's wishes, I should shoot him without remorse.

"But I have rendered you important service; I brought you news of the arrival of the Russian vessels."

"Very well; for that I thank you, and you shall

have a dress of honour. But another time, do not threaten."

I sent for the dress accordingly, and he was apparelled in it. I then bade him ride back to Hussun Mhatoor, and say that I could not return to Mung Kishlauk upon the representation of a stranger, who denied having seen him, Hussun; but that if he would send any one whom I knew, with the letter I had given him on parting, I should then be assured that the messenger had come from him.

I hoped to have got rid of the Kuzzauk at once, that he might return to Hussun, under the impression that I was waiting at Dāna Bae's tent for an answer; but he still lingered about the camp, and did not quit it until the following day, when, of course, all my arrangements were known.

We lay down to rest, Dāna Bae close on my left, succeeded by his wife and some of his children. His eldest daughter would have taken her place at my other side, had not Nizaum already fallen fast asleep there. She and her father were long in consultation about it, and seemed inclined to awaken Nizaum; but it ended by her leaving the tent, I thought reluctantly; and I was relieved from the most embarrassing of positions, the result of which it was impossible to foresee.

I was so little satisfied of Dāna Bae's good faith, and so uneasy at what I had observed of his conduct, when he supposed me asleep or inattentive, that I would not now close my eyes, but assumed a half-recumbent posture, my hand ever upon the hilt of my dagger. A thousand trifling circumstances, which can scarcely be detailed, had led me to this distrust, and confirmed my resolution to be night and day upon

my guard, to watch his slightest movements, and wake whilst my servants slept. My property, of inestimable value in his eyes, was now under his roof: a dagger stroke would have made it his, or, at least, have given him a very considerable share. His avarice I knew to be unbounded, his word unworthy of trust. He had vehemently opposed my journey to Mungh Kishlauk, until the Hyæna whispered something in his ear. He had then suddenly changed his mind, and recommended as strongly as he had opposed it. He had once unwarily designated my property—*his* property.

The night passed without incident; but being myself awake, I perceived that Dāna Bae slept little, and was constantly stirring. The ensuing day, 17th April, at about twelve o'clock, all Dāna Bae's arrangements were complete; and bidding the family farewell, we started, Dāna Bae and his eldest son serving as guides, and my baggage being carried upon his three miserable camels; one of which was a female, followed by her young one. I observed, by my compass, that we made East by a point North; marching upon a dark mountain; which, from its position, I supposed to be that pointed out by a Kuzzauk, as the locality of Dahsh Gullah. It proved, however, to be only the first of a chain of similar summits, whose course, nearly East and West, severs from the main land a considerable peninsula, of which I know not the correct designation.* At night we reached the verge of some chalk cliffs, and bivouacked on the summit; that is, lay down in our cloaks upon the earth, whilst the horses were picqueted, and the camels set free to browse the wormwood.

* In one of Arrowsmith's maps it is called Bucadzi.

April 18th.—Two hours before daylight resumed the march, descending the chalk cliffs into a narrow valley, up which we pursued our course for five or six hours, when we reached a Kawreeze* of pure water, where also appeared a few cultivated fields, the first we had seen since quitting the borders of the Oxus. Having here refreshed ourselves and cattle, we continued ascending several valleys, generally scarped by chalk cliffs, and encamped at night in one of them. According to my resolution, I never slept at night; at least, if my eyes were closed, 'twas but for a few minutes at a time, and I looked out constantly to observe the motions of the guides. These were this night suspicious. They were awake, great part of the night, whispering together, and often looking toward me. I reclined always dressed and armed, ready to act upon a moment's notice; and I am convinced that this circumstance, and my wakefulness, saved my throat this night at least. How long I could sustain this system I knew not, and feared I must sink under it. It was, however, absolutely necessary, for my people were all heavy and determined sleepers, whom nothing could arouse.

April 19th.—Resuming the journey, under a drizzling rain, which had been treasured for us in the black mantle of clouds, that swathed the mountain chain in front; we continued ascending a steep path until noon; when after eight hours of toil, under a continual shower, we reached the summit of a range of heights, parallel to the dark mountain ridge on the left. Here we found some Kuzzauks feeding their flocks of sheep, and here we sat down for a couple of hours, to let our cattle graze, whilst the wind beat

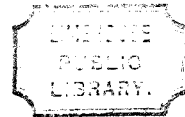
* Chain of wells.

the rain in torrents upon us. We had attained a considerable elevation, having ascended during eighteen hours, and latterly, by a steep acclivity. Yet the dark peaks of the chain on my left were, still, very much elevated above me; I conjectured, that they must be two thousand feet higher than the level of the Caspian. They stretch nearly East and West, in line regular as a wall. The summits are bare, ragged, isolated, and I could count a triple range, of nearly similar height, in the same parallel rows. Their surface is singularly rugged, dark and barren. They are amongst the most antique-looking and weather-beaten mountains, that I have ever met with; and I have seen not a few. So far as I could guess, from the *débris* at their feet, and their general aspect, I should judge them to be of old sandstone formation.*

To the foot of this mountain we descended, and put up for the night. Ali Muhummud had visited a Kuzzauk tent, and on enquiry had informed the inhabitants that I was a Russian ambassador. I rebuked him, and directed that he should answer all future enquiries by a true statement; viz., that I was an English ambassador from the Khaun Huzurut to the Auk Padshah or Emperor of Russia. I watched, all this night, while my people slept: the rain pouring upon us throughout the night. This rain was regretted chiefly because it rendered our flight, encumbered by baggage, so hopeless.

April 20th.—We arose, under the rain, which had soaked us throughout the night, and followed the

* In a very large Map of Russia given me by General Peroffski, these mountains are designated "Mungkishlauksya." The map was published previous to the construction of Fort Nuovo Alexandroffski.



course of the mountain ridge on our left, always descending. We made little progress, owing to the depth of the mud in some places, and the slipperiness of the harder soil. The exposure was far from agreeable, but neither myself nor my people ever knew what it was to catch cold; and I believe, with Franklin, that it is a disorder unknown to dwellers in the open air. At noon, we reached a spot deserving notice: viz. a portion of the valley strewn with gigantic spheres of sandstone, many of them eight or ten feet high. It might have been the bowling green of the Cyclops. Indeed it was difficult to look at these mighty spheres, and consider their position, without fancying figures, of bulk sufficient to handle them. They appear to have been originally square blocks of sandstone, the angles of which, being worn off by the weather, had left them, short, round-headed cylinders. The base and upper angles of these, again, absorbing moisture, had given way at the edges, as we constantly see in ruinous brick-buildings, and thus an almost perfect sphere had been formed, of the original cube. This process was still incomplete in some of the cubes. What a subject for fable would not this have been, in the Highlands of Scotland!

Remounting, we pursued our course, still parallel with the mountain chain, which sentinelled our left flank in gigantic rank and file. At night we searched for pasture; but the earth was too barren to bear any decent crop of wormwood, and the poor camels and horses, wearied as they were with their exertions in the muddy soil of the two preceding days, were picqueted in the rain, with almost no fodder.

April 21st.—Morning dawned upon us, through a dripping mantle; but the earth was becoming rather

firmer. At about noon we passed the last mountain of the range, and found that its successive and parallel ridges are here cut, at right angles, by the high and undulating steppe. Here we met some Kuzzauk camps on the move. The children packed securely in baskets upon the baggage, the women leading the strings of camels, excepting the more venerable dames, who were accommodated with seats on the camels. Some Kuzzauk horsemen appeared, one of whom, Yar Muhummud by name, wore the sheep-skin bonnet covered with broad cloth, which generally denotes wealth or dignity; he rode up to Dāna Bae and his son, and entered into close conversation with them.

Dāna Bae's pony, which had always been a wretched animal, was now dead lame, and I insisted upon his changing it. This, after much demur, he consented to, but under some circumstances, the exact nature of which has escaped my memory, but which left no doubt of his treachery. I was careful to point out such facts to my people, and in particular to Ali, that it might incite them to vigilance; but Ali, about this time, began to take up a notion of Dāna Bae's good faith, from which the most open demonstrations of treachery could not shake him: the consequences will be seen.

We proceeded over highly undulating ground, whose valleys and ridges bore North and South. Toward evening, we surmounted the last of the ridges, and saw in front, and perhaps a thousand feet below, a bay of the Caspian, which appeared both narrow and shallow, and which must have been, I imagine, the south-west corner of the inlet Kāra Soo. Not a sail was visible upon it, and the guide declared, that

vessels do not frequent this coast. He stated, that Dahsh Gullah was still about eighty or ninety miles from us. The sight of the Caspian was cheering. It was a point long looked for, and knowing that the Russian fort lay upon its borders, I felt less helplessly dependent upon our treacherous guides. In descending, some flints appeared on the hill side, which my people saw, for the first time, in their natural state, and eagerly searched for fragments, fitted for the purpose of striking fire.

We selected for our bivouac the least barren spot. I was ill pleased that the younger guide went, on pretence of discovering water, to a Kuzzauk Khail in the neighbourhood. It was, indeed, extremely difficult to prevent him from intercourse with the people of the country, for at one spot he would profess ignorance of the position of water; at another he would lose the road; at another it was necessary to inquire for spots, affording the least scanty growth of wormwood for the camels and horses. Ali had orders to follow him about, but he frequently eluded these, being confident in the Kuzzauk's good faith. The camels, imperfectly fed, and suffering from toil in the mire of the country, were fast failing; and the horses were nearly exhausted, upon their reduced rations of hard rice, the only food we had for them.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A Rencontre—Its Result—Hasten our March—Toilsome Ascent of the Cliffs of the Caspian—Suspicious Conduct of the younger Guide—Bivouac at the Summit—Absence of the younger Guide—Meditations—Carelessness of my People threatening us with Ruin—Lighten the Camel Loads—Farther Preparations—Resumption of Journey—Ahris Mha-toor—Descent—Treachorous Conduct of the younger Guide—Attempt to secure the Elder in my Interests—The Monk—Bivouac—Suspicious Action of Dāna Bae—The Alarm—The Night Attack—Result—Reflections—The Interposition—Fate of three of my Suite.

APRIL 22nd.—Last night I was more than ever vigilant, believing we should have been attacked. In the morning we proceeded to the shores of the Caspian, the ground here shelving much toward the water from the heights; whilst a few miles further on steep chalk cliffs, 500 feet high, rise abruptly from the waves. I was riding ahead, with Dāna Bae, my servants following at some distance with the younger guide and the camels. On reaching the shore, six Kuzzauk horsemen, armed in various ways with long spears, swords, &c., rode up, and parleyed with Dāna Bae. I called Ali, to interpret, and found that they desired me to turn back with them to their Khail, as they expected an order for my recall from the Khaun Huzurut; that the black Russian interpreter, whom they had sent prisoner to Khiva, had informed the

Khaun that I was a spy, and that they were in daily expectation of the order aforesaid.

I enquired how they knew all this.

They said that the Hyæna had been sent by Hussun Mhatoor, to order them to arrest me, and that a Toorcumun had given the same instructions.

I replied that, if they would produce any order from the Khaun forbidding my advance, I would obey; but that, having his *order* to proceed in my pocket, I could not attend to their *expectations*. They replied, with many menacing gestures, that they would stop me by force. I rode up to them without more ado, and drew my pistols from the holsters. At sight of these little implements, they retreated some forty paces in great dismay, but, finding they were not pursued, turned, and sent one of their party, a young man of some two and twenty years, on foot, to parley. He drew near with some caution, and finding no hostile demonstrations, sat down upon the ground to argue the point with Dāna Bae. His arguments have been detailed; he repeated them, thumping the earth every now and then in a decisive manner with his thick whip. Ali stood by to listen. Dāna Bae upon this strongly urged me to go back, and wait for the Khaun's order. I had in my pocket the only order the Khaun would ever issue on the subject, and was well aware that it was a trap of Hussun Mhatoor, whose prey I, my servants, and all my property must inevitably become, should I listen to the suggestion. I replied, as before, that I bore in my pocket the Khaun's commission, was his ambassador, proceeding upon business of the most vital importance; that if anyone checked me, Khiva would be lost, and the wrath of the Khaun Huzurut wreaked upon the inter-

meddler ; that, having such commission, I should treat as the Khaun Huzurut's foe anyone who attempted to obstruct my path, and shoot him without hesitation. As for Dāna Bae, I insisted upon his immediately proceeding toward Dahsh Gullah. He complied very reluctantly, lingering and looking often behind him. I asked him why he did not make haste. He said he feared the horsemen. I desired him to give himself no trouble about them, to be faithful, and to obey my orders, and to leave the horsemen to me. The younger guide seemed still more reluctant. We lost sight of the horsemen as we gained the hollow of the sea-shore ; but this was little satisfaction, for our camels, half dead with fatigue, and our horses in bad condition from short commons, it were easy for them at any time to overtake us.

I called Ali to my side, and questioned him upon the Kuzzaik resources. He said that hundreds of horsemen could be mustered at a few hours' notice, but that, at the sound of fire-arms, all would take to their heels. This determined me to commence hostilities with a discharge of fire-arms. I then called my other followers around me. The old Meerza had one of my best Persian sabres ; but, although I knew he would faint at the sight of it unscabbarded, I could not dishonour him by depriving him of that necessary appendage of a gentleman. Ali Muhummud had a spear and sword. Nizaum had a sabre, and was well mounted. Hajji, the groom, had also a sabre, but Yakoob and Maimood were unarmed. I promised Yakoob a sabre on halting, and bade him remember, that I had found him a groom, and promoted him to the dignity of Meer-a-Khor (Lord of the Manger), and that he must shew mettle in his new rank.

Summud Khaun carried my carabine, a sabre, and battle-axe ; not to mention his defensive armour of old cloaks and slops, with pockets cram-full of sugar, biscuits, tea, tobacco, flints and steel, knives of all shapes and sizes ; tea-cups, spoons, &c. I mustered them all up ; bidding them remember that they were Afghauns, the defenders of Heraut against an army of 40,000 Persians. We helped out our predicament with a little laughter. Yakoob swore a tremendous oath not to be wanting in the *mêlée*, and even Maimood agreed to charge the Kuzzauk array, hatchet in hand.

We pushed on, following the borders of the sea, until we came to the cliffs ; under which we found a rocky path, that, soon turning to the right, scaled the heights by a very steep ascent. At a third of the ascent, the female camel fell under her burthen, and when half an hour had been lost in endeavouring to get her up, another half hour was expended in shifting her burthen to the other camels, overloaded as they already were. Whilst thus busied, Nizaum's and Ali Muhummud's horses commenced a furious combat upon the steep side of the cliff, falling and rolling repeatedly, and again renewing the fight. The ferocity of Toorcumun horses, on such occasions, is to be conceived only by those who have viewed it. I feared that both would have been precipitated down the cliff, just at the moment their services were most required : but we at length secured them, and struggled on, leaving the female camel on the road. At about 200 feet from the summit, we found ourselves opposed by a sheer precipice, without footpath. The younger guide had slipped away in the confusion, upon pretence of driving on the female camel.

We turned back ; the descent proving almost as harassing as the ascent to the overtaken camels. Dāna Bae's son met us, and pointed out the right path : but began signalling to persons below, until I compelled him to desist openly. It was impossible to prevent him from making signs on various pretexts. I therefore pointed out again his doings to Ali, and commanded him to cut off all communication, between him and the people of the country. To which Ali replied, "I will answer for it, Sir, with my life, that these guides are true men." Thus I perceived that I must depend wholly upon my own vigilance. Could I have conjectured what motive the miscreants had for their treachery, I should have adopted another precaution : but I did not even suspect, until the catastrophe, that Summud Khaun, who, as steward, had charge of the silver for current expenses, fearing, in case of treachery, that this circumstance might point him out as a particular mark for violence ; had made over a bag containing 700 tungas (small silver pieces, each worth five-pence), to the younger guide. This sum, constantly before his eyes, and an unheard-of treasure in his estimation, was an irresistible incentive to treachery : for the whole became his, unknown to anyone, and in addition to any claim he might have upon the plunder, if he could only get rid of me. Had Summud Khaun given me a hint of this characteristic act of his, I should at once have solemnly conferred the money upon our guides, in addition to the reward promised them on our safe arrival.

On reaching the summit of this lone and toilsome ascent, I found the camels quite incapable of moving without rest and food, and although speed was our

only chance of safety, was obliged to consent to a halt of two hours. No water was procurable. The younger guide rode with a skin in search. I had seen half-melted snow under the cliff; so that he ought to have been able to fill the water-skin immediately. I, meanwhile, was busied in changing my dress for one better suited for active exertion, and my heavy boots for half-boots of English fashion, so that I might be able to relieve my horse by walking. I braced on the sabre which I carried as a present from the Khaun, and made over my own more beautiful blade to Nizaum, who bequeathed his, in turn, to Yakooob. Summud Khaun was directed to carry on his person, *i.e.*, in his breeches, the jewelled harness; stowed away there with some ten pounds avoirdupois of grocery and hardwares; the jewelled dagger I wrapped up carefully, and bound in my girdle, wearing my own dagger beside it.

Here I lightened, as far as possible, the loads of our camels, by sacrificing half a camel's load of odds and ends; which I was obliged to allow Dāna Bae to deposit in the tent of a neighbouring Khail; for, if left on the plain, it would have incited the people of the steppe to follow and plunder us. I then went to see what the younger guide was about. He had been absent an hour. I met him returning. I then descended a portion of the gigantic cliffs. Not a sound was stirring, excepting the faint murmur of the waves of the Caspian, as they fell amongst the rocks below. The Caspian itself lay smiling before me, blue and serene as the unclouded heavens; but without a sail, without an ark of refuge, cold and pitiless as the grave. Yet an Englishman is never thoroughly at home when remote from the sea—the

bulwark of his liberty, the field of his renown ; and the aspect of these waters recalled to me many sad and sweet memories of the past, and many an unrealised dream of the time to come. My present situation was not forgotten, but ceased to burthen my mind ; and I enjoyed a luxury long foreign to me, but indulged in too freely in former days.

When I aroused myself from this dreamy mood, I found my hopes brighter and my heart lighter. Provided that by vigilance I could guard against surprise, I thought that superior courage, the weight of our horses, and the despair with which we ought to be animated, might carry the day against great odds. Peril, with all its disagreeables, has for its accompaniment a chord of the sublime ; and had my men been of the fighting breed, or myself acquainted with the Toorkish language, I would not willingly have exchanged my position for one of greater safety.

I walked back to the bivouac, where arrangements were still in progress for the march. The camels were now very lightly laden, and though exhausted by an ascent which had occupied several hours, contrived to crawl forward under their loads. My Yamoot horse was, however, quite gone, and could with difficulty be led forward, and the horse I rode was fast failing, so that I was obliged to trust much to my feet. We pressed on over a high plain, by a course nearly parallel with the shore, but not in sight of the sea. At about three o'clock we passed near a Kuzzauk Khail. Several of the inhabitants came forth to gaze at our cavalcade ; and the guides pleaded the necessity of inquiring about fodder and water. One of these Kuzzauks, whom I afterwards knew as Ahris Mhatoor (*i.e.* Ahris, the hero), was a tall raw-

boned fellow, of the most hideous aspect. He wore a scanty and peculiar cap of tawny lambskin fur, scarcely covering the upper part of the head. With him the younger guide contrived, in spite of my exertions, to exchange many private words and significant glances. We rode on over a high steppe scantily supplied with wormwood, and occasionally marked by Kuzzauk cemeteries. Evening was closing when we found ourselves descending the cliffs into a deep and wide ravine, with the prospect of immediately re-ascending. All this was sad work for our exhausted cattle. My horse was almost past work, and I was obliged to walk, refusing all the proffers of my people; for in cases of life and death, all are on a level: and as we had now only sixty miles before us, I did not fear on my own account.

On this descent, the younger guide contrived to lag behind, when not actually driven forward by my orders; and from time to time, I observed him turn and wave his arms wildly. I rode up to him, and sternly commanded him to keep his face in the direction of our march. On myself looking round, I perceived several human figures amongst the rocks in the distance; but these might be shepherds, of whom there were many tending their flocks in the neighbourhood. When the young miscreant perceived that I would not quit him, he stopped on pretence of saying his prayers, a ceremony he had never before performed, and turning his person round, went through the usual prostrations, signalling to the people amongst the rocks, whenever he thought my eye removed from him. I waited patiently the conclusion of his prayers, and then made him precede me.

I had at our late halt called Dāna Bāe to me, had

taken out and displayed to him one of the Khaun Huzurut's letters, bearing the royal seal, and explained to him the nature and importance of my office, and how much the Khaun's heart was set upon the success of my mission. Should it be interrupted by anyone, I assured him the Khaun would root out him and his whole family from the earth. I told him all the anxiety of the Khaun for my safety, and the strict orders he had given Hussun Mhatoor respecting it. Finally, I assured him of rich and ample reward, beyond his highest expectations, if he proved faithful to me. He was lavish of his professions; and as I could make it, I thought, worth his while to be faithful to me, I did not altogether discredit them. I did not know that Summud Khaun had made him my purse-bearer.

The country we were now entering is broken by wild crags and chasms. On the pointed summit of one of the heights stood a dark figure, far too gigantic to be human, yet resembling a monk in a cloak and cowl, with hand outstretched as if warning or threatening. Being on foot, I could not get near the guide to inquire what it was. It may have been a landmark.

On reaching the valley, a barren clay soil appeared, producing scarcely a blade of vegetation. Evening had fallen, our cattle were exhausted. The high cliffs were to be ascended; the moon would not rise for some hours. Anxious as I was to push on, and much as I disliked such a position of bivouac, there seemed no possibility of surmounting those cliffs without refreshment to the cattle. Our guides insisted upon the necessity of this; and I reluctantly complied. We chose the only spot presenting a few

stunted plants of wormwood. The guides had, of course, brought no food for the camels, in a country where grain is unknown. They were dependent upon this miserable browse. A deep water-course was on the south, occasionally fringed with shrubs. Around us was the shadow of the cliffs. The sky was overcast, and it was a spot of gloom. I ordered my people not to lay aside their arms, nor unsaddle their horses, but to be vigilant, and ready to mount at a moment's notice. I calculated that we were beyond pursuit of any but cavalry. Indeed, in a country so abounding in galloways, it is contrary to the genius of the people to attack on foot; and as the earth was very hard, I reckoned upon hearing the approach of horses in time to mount and form a front.

I had finished a hasty repast, and was awaiting the rising of the moon to renew the journey. Having the prospect of a walk of sixty miles before me, I found it necessary to husband my strength, and was reclining on my carpet, listening to every sound, armed and on my feet at the slightest stir. I laid my ear along the earth from time to time, the better to catch the sound of hoofs. My people had finished their dinner, and were variously disposed of. I had no means of posting sentinels, for each servant found ample occupation in attending to his horse, &c. Nevertheless, we kept a decent look-out. Suddenly, Dāna Bae rushed forward to the spot where I reclined, having Summud Khaun's battle-axe raised above his head, and almost stumbling over me. Thinking he was about to strike, I caught up and presented a pistol. He paused, shaded his eyes with his left hand, made some apology, and left me. The gesture was suspicious; but amid so many causes of

suspicion, I was sometimes inclined to believe my fancy was exaggerating. He immediately proposed that we should extinguish the fires, as tending to point out our position to an enemy. This precaution, constantly adopted in warfare, rather re-assured me, and I ordered that it should be carried into effect. I afterwards learned that it was a preconcerted signal. It saved a few lives, for the light of the fires would have enabled me to strike without fear of killing my own people. Hitherto there had not been the slightest noise. I was aware, indeed, that the younger guide had slipped away in the darkness to a neighbouring Khail, under pretence of getting water; but this was a daily occurrence, and I rather expected the attack would be deferred, until we should be entangled in the passes of the cliffs ahead, where resistance was extremely difficult, and our superior mounting of no avail.

Suddenly cries were heard in the direction of the water-course. My impression was, that our enemies were endeavouring to cripple our march, by stealing a horse or two; I therefore snatched up my pistols, and rushed toward the horses. Here I found Nizaum and Hajji with their sabres drawn. Yakoob assured me the horses were safe, and as the sounds now came from another spot, I hastened thither, followed, as I supposed, by Nizaum and Hajji. Here all was confusion, but the darkness was so great, that I could distinguish nothing but moving figures; whether servants or robbers I knew not. My finger was upon the trigger of my pistol, but I dared not fire, lest I should kill my own people. Suddenly, I was struck from the rear by three clubs, falling together. I staggered, but, the clubs being of willow, I did not

fall, until the blows were, the next instant, repeated, and I was prostrated, though without losing my pistol. I sprang to my feet; but the Kuzzauks, who were standing over me, instantly struck me to the earth, and one of their clubs falling upon my arm, struck the pistol out of my hand. I believe I was stunned for the moment. When I recovered, having still my sabre at my side, I laid hand upon it, and had reached my knee and right foot, when several clubs took effect, and stretched me upon my back, and two Kuzzauks threw themselves upon me, the one seizing my sabre, and endeavouring to wrench it, belt and all, from my body; the other trying to tear away the Emperor's jewelled dagger, bound in my girdle. A third, with a light club, showered blows from behind upon my head and shoulders. The struggles of the plunderers recalled me to consciousness, which previously was almost lost. Their tugs at my girdle assisted the strength still left me; I suddenly sat up, and drawing my own dagger, stabbed at the junction of the throat and thorax the Kuzzauk in front of me. He fell, and I was turning upon the other, when I saw the arm of a fourth raised to strike me with some weapon. I raised my dagger to guard my head. The sabre fell upon my hand, severing two fingers, disjuncting the thumb, and shattering the solid ivory handle of the dagger. Other blows of clubs, from the rear, stretched me again upon my back, no longer able to move. I know not whether I lost my senses; but if so, when they returned, they were clear as the noon day. My right hand was numbed, but I knew not the extent of damage, and tried to rise. The slightest motion of the head produced vertigo, and my limbs were quite powerless, the flesh being, in

fact, beaten to a jelly; but whenever I lay still, the clearness of all my faculties returned upon a mind, as calm as ever I had known it.

I collected my scattered thoughts. I reasoned, as often I had reasoned in extremity. I summed up the full bitterness of my present condition, wounded, helpless, in the hands of robbers, in a desert far remote from my people, on a shore scarcely known by name to the civilized world; death threatening me at every moment, escape utterly hopeless, and worst of all, my mission lost; all my anxieties, toils, and sufferings, endured in vain; and I asked myself, whether I had ever been worse: and I referred to sufferings, compared with which, the present seemed a jest. The hand of God had, unhopèd, delivered me from those, and now I inly prayed, not for deliverance, but for constancy and strength to encounter the worst, without faltering, or disgracing my country, or my name. The moment was sufficiently gloomy, but there flashed upon my mind the remembrance of hearts, precious in the sight of the Most High, whose daily prayers were for a son, a brother: and whilst this beacon burned for me, I could not utterly despair.

The exact succession of thought I cannot remember; but having often afterwards recalled those moments, whilst the impression was recent, I recollect all that passed through my mind. Every now and then a Kuzzauk spied me out, and cut at me, in passing, with sabre, hatchet, or club. Thinking it would be something to save my eyesight, I laid my left hand over my eyes, as I lay helpless on my back. A sabre fell upon it, inflicting a deep gash, and laying open my right eyebrow. The hand would probably have been severed, but for a ring which a sister had

drawn upon it many years previously, and which had never since been removed. If ever she read this record, she will have pleasure in the thought, that her gift has saved me from being utterly crippled. As at each fresh blow I felt my senses reel, I fondly hoped it was death. I held my breath sometimes, to assist the escape of my spirit: I would not raise a hand to break the blow I saw aimed at me. But the swoon was only momentary: my senses and my reason returned, clear and calm as ever: and the difficulty of finding death, re-awakened that instinct by which we cling to existence.

Just then a Kuzzauk bent over me, and thrust his hand into my bosom. I supposed he was seeking plunder, but soon found that he laid his hand upon my bare breast, as if to ascertain whether I still lived. If, thought I, he finds me still alive, he will mangle me a little more, and leave me just as much alive as ever. I instinctively held my breath, and he left me uncertain of my condition. He, however, soon returned, and again thrust his hand into my bosom; and finding me still warm, and probably detecting the pulses of my heart, stood over me, and with his matchlock warded off the blows made by others as they passed me. Nizaum, at that moment, reeled up to the spot, under the blows of several of the brigands, crying aloud for quarter. He fell at my head, and seeing me to all appearance lifeless, forgot his own condition to weep over me, saying, "Aye, Sahib, Sahib!" Summud Khaun I had long heard on my left, groaning and uttering aloud the profession of the orthodox, under the apprehension, perhaps, of being mistaken for his Feringee master; the black Russian, necromancer, idolater.

Perceiving that this Kuzzauk (Cherkush Bae,*) had friendly intentions, I touched his foot. He bent his head to mine, and I whispered, "Tillah," gold, a word common to both Persian and Toorkish. He answered eagerly, "Have you gold?" I endeavoured to draw out my purse with my right hand, and then discovered, for the first time, the extent of the damage. I, therefore, with the left hand, which was less injured, gave him my purse. Then pointing to Nizaum and Summud Khaun, who lay on each side of me, and afterwards to heaven, I said, "For the love of God;" an Arabic phrase also current in Tartary. He pressed my hand, and signed me to lie still, which I afterwards did, being indeed unequal to any exertion. Cherkush Bae stood over us, protecting us from the other brigands.

I again rolled my eyes around, endeavouring to get some hint of the fate of my other followers, and to impress upon my mind a scene which, should I get out of my present predicament, would be worth remembering. The night was still sufficiently dark. Uncouth forms were rushing here and there, in their horse-skin dresses and sheep-skin bonnets, brandishing clubs and hatchets. Shouts and sounds, as of strife, were still heard, but they were fast subsiding. Indeed, we were taken at such disadvantage by the assailants, between forty and fifty in number, who, being in correspondence with the guides, had arranged everything as they pleased; that only two of the people had even drawn a weapon, and not a blow was struck on our side, excepting the dagger-stroke above mentioned. The two swords were instantly beaten down, and blows fell so thick, that there was no time to answer them, even could we have seen at what to strike.

* Cherkush, a corruption of Sirkusk, the Rebellious.

The Kuzzauks who had been watching our motions for some time, had never lost sight of one of us, and accordingly struck with confidence and effect.

One of my pistols, which had fallen from my hand, was now picked up by a Kuzzauk, and discharged, either intentionally or by accident. I saw two or three of them take to their heels at the report, in the wildest terror. I was good-natured enough to hope it had astonished them, in more ways than one. I could nowhere distinguish Ali Muhummud, Yakoob, the Meerza, Hajji, or Maimood. It seemed scarcely possible that they should have escaped a snare so artfully set. One or two of my horses were standing near, the rest seemed to have escaped. Several times Kuzzauks approached to rifle me, but were driven off by Cherkush Bae ; once, when he left me for an instant, a fellow seized my half-boot and endeavoured to drag it off ; and another time a Kuzzauk, catching my mangled hand in his, dragged me like a sack along the earth, and cast me down near one of our fires, which had been rekindled, that he might see the better to plunder. I made no motion, and he thought me dead. Cherkush Bae came back in time to save me. He led Nizaum to the same spot, and thither Summud Khaun was dragged, groaning and uttering his articles of belief. Here, also, several of the assailants collected, to examine the spoils they had taken, and talk over their exploits. They pointed often at me, and several times weapons were lifted to finish me ; but so far as I could guess, Cherkush Bae told them I was already dead. Again a Kuzzauk seized me by the foot, and endeavoured to draw off my boot. The leg recoiled, perhaps, with too much elasticity, and he declared that I was still alive. This

Cherkush Bae seemed to deny. He stood over and effectually protected me.

At length one of them, the youth, I think, who had parleyed with us in the morning, drew his sword, and aimed a blow at my head. I was taken by surprise, and flinched, which set my existence beyond doubt. I know not what arguments were used by Cherkush, in the stormy debate that ensued, to save my life ; perhaps the general order of the Khaun Huzurut, to save the lives of all Russian prisoners. He now placed a folded cloak under my head, and, whilst he was doing this, I contrived to slip cautiously into his hand all my despatches, excepting one, a letter from the Khaun Huzurut, which I kept as a testimonial of my office, as the Khaun's ambassador ; I also gave him my gold seals and keys.

Yakoob, Knight of the Manger, was now led up under the blows of several Kuzzauks, and forced to sit near me. Many melancholy greetings passed between him and Nizaum, and I exerted myself to mutter a few kind words to him. It appeared that he was not much hurt : his weapon had been struck out of his hand ere he could draw it. Nizaum's right arm was numbed by a blow from the back of a hatchet, but whether broken or not he could not say. He had been armed with my beautiful Damascus blade ; but the blows of the assailants fell so suddenly, and so thick, that he could only raise it above his head to ward them. Two or three of the clubs of soft wood were divided upon the edge of this weapon, as if they had been deal shavings. Ahris Mhatoor, however, rushing forward, beat down the sabre with his hatchet, and then felled poor Nizaum with a blow of the back of that instrument ; it being the object of

the Kuzzauks to save the lives of my people, in order to sell them as slaves.

Summud Khaun, who, since entering Kuzzauk land, had volunteered to carry my carabine (knowing the fear of Kuzzauks for fire-arms), had just carefully drawn the leathern case over the gun to shield it from dew. when the Kuzzauks rushed upon him, smashed the carabine with a blow, and compressed, grievously, with sundry others, the half-dozen cloaks upon his shoulders, breaking whole pounds of biscuit and loaf-sugar in his breeches pockets, and finally rolling him over and over, like a large ball of worsted, now head, now heels to the zenith. As soon as his extreme astonishment had somewhat subsided, his wit returned, and perceiving the great inconvenience of being mistaken for a Russian, necromancer, and idolater, he set up his pipes, as we have seen.

At this moment, the poor old Meerza was led up to the fire ; his hands bound together ; his shaven head covered with bruises, and streaming with blood ; his face bloody, and one of his eyes forced almost out of the socket, as I supposed, by the pressure of the brain from within. He staggered forward, saying to each of the brigands in turn, "Have the goodness to untie my hands," as if it were a request which could not be refused. They answered him with blows and kicks. He then appealed to his fellow-servants. They begged him to be quiet, for that the hand of God was upon us, and we must submit. He again turned to the robbers, his wits evidently were deranged ; "Bāba Jān," he said, "Bāba Jān, dust-i-mauh Kullasskoon." A brutal Kuzzauk bestowed upon him two violent kicks upon the back. He fell upon his face, and did not afterwards move ; I hoped he was dead.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Hilarity of the young Guide—The Letter—Scene—Consultations and Reports of the Kuzzauk Assailants—Night on the Field of Strife—Meditations—Desperate Posture of my Affairs—Triumph of the Coward Yar Muhummud—State of my Party—Symptoms of a Move—Ahris, the Hero—Retrograde Movement—Helpless Condition of my Meerza—Our shattered and melancholy Cavalcade—Halt at Soosun Uttah—Summud Khaun's Sagacious Arrangement for our Safety—Spite of the younger Guide—The Curse of the Koraun—Arrival of Tents—Arrangements for our Disposal—Yar Muhummud and the Tempter—First Repast as Captives—Soft Flattery in an Unknown Tongue—Character of Ahris Mha-toor—The Covenant—Night Alarms—Varieties of Death—Second Night of Our Captivity.

THE Kuzzauks continued to collect at the spot where I lay, until about twenty were assembled; amongst these were the two guides; the younger, laughing and enjoying the joke exceedingly. As most words used in Toorkish to denote the products of civilized life are borrowed from the Persian tongue, I had little difficulty in comprehending the topics of discourse, although unable to follow the speakers. The young miscreant told them, as a great joke, that I had a letter as long as his arm.

This letter, I now made Nizaum spread before Cherkush Bae ; and as he could speak a few words of Toorkish, I made him point out the royal seal, and explain, that I was the Khaun's ambassador, and no Russian as they supposed. The letter was handed

round the circle, but none present could read it. All therefore gravely shook their heads, and it was returned to me. I fancied, however, that it had occasioned some doubt. I kept this letter always upon my person, that I might display it on emergency. I could not move my head without swooning, but so long as I lay still, I had the fullest possession of my faculties. They were mercifully spared me, for none of my people made the slightest use of theirs, excepting, indeed, Summud Khaun, whose groans and creed were so characteristic of the man, that, despite my exhausted condition and forlorn predicament, they struck me with a sense of the ludicrous.

There was indeed a dash of comedy mixed up in this melancholy scene. A young Kuzzauk had already apparelled himself in my embroidered uniform, and was strutting before me in evident content; others were half dressed in their own uncouth attire, half in mine, or in my servants', and looked as might look a detachment of hogs and bears, rigged out for a masquerade; several rudely endeavoured to tear my furred cloak from my back: but this was prevented by my protector. He could not, however, prevent them from wrenching from my side the silver-mounted scabbard of the Khaun's sabre. The blade had been carried off when I was cut down. In endeavouring to loosen for them the clasp of the belt, the shattered condition of my right hand became manifest, and excited much discussion, the nature of which I could only faintly conjecture, from the expression of their rude countenances, dimly lighted by the glare of the fire. Cherkush Bae expressed much sympathy for the injury, which he proceeded to examine, handling the limb with much tenderness.

“Well, Nizaum,” I said, “I suppose all the fingers are lost?” Such, indeed, was my impression, for I felt them dangling in every direction.

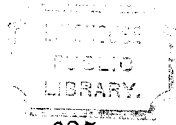
“Not all, Sir,” replied Nizaum. “One is safe, praised be God; nay! two.”

“Which are they; the little finger, I know, is dangling?”

“No, Sir, that’s the forefinger that dangles past the little finger.”

Such proved to be the case. The forefinger hung only by the sinew. The middle finger was cut through the bone, close to the knuckle. The thumb was disjoined, but the mischief had ended at the third finger, in which was a deep gash. Cherkush Bae gave me to understand that the forefinger must come off. I put my hand into his, and signed to him to cut away. He laid the sinew upon the handle of his hatchet, and drew from his belt an ugly lump of iron, passing current in those rude countries as a knife. This proved to be so blunt, that he was obliged to sharpen it upon the back of the hatchet; even then, it was long in cranching its way through the tough sinew. He then bound up, in coarse rag, the shattered hand, without attempting to adjust the fingers, and twined some scraps of linen round the wounded fingers of the left hand, carefully concealing the ring, which (as it was impossible to draw it off) might, if seen, cost me another finger.

Several hideous Kuzzauk women had for some time appeared. The Meerza, it would seem, had been bound by these, after being struck down by the clubs of the men. They lighted a second fire, and prepared a pilau of our rice and mutton. Around this a group soon collected, curiously composed, of the



wild, scarcely human costume of the Kuzzauks; horses' skins with fur outward, bonnets of wolf's and lamb's skin, and our garments hanging upon unaccustomed backs. I perceived, by their glances, that much of their conversation related to me; it was conducted in whispers. One of them, upon being questioned, glanced at me, and then drew his finger significantly across his throat.* I perceived that only three of my horses were present, and hoped that my three missing servants might effect their escape upon the remainder, if indeed they had not been slain.

After supper, the Kuzzauks lay down to sleep; one or two only keeping watch. The night was very cold; perhaps it saved some effusion of blood. The quantity I had lost, no doubt prevented the worst consequences to be apprehended, from the violence my brain and whole frame had suffered.

My mind was very desolate. My mission was unfulfilled: a mission which success alone could redeem from the charge of rashness. All my foresight, toil, and watching had been rendered futile by the blind obstinacy of my people, and for myself and them there remained the alternative of slavery or death.

It may be believed, that in the course of that long and cheerless night, other thoughts, however resisted, *would* occasionally intrude;—my unprotected home, my widowed mother, the sisters, who had yearly looked for my return from exile.

April 23rd.—At daybreak, several of the Kuzzauks, after consultation, mounted my horses and rode in pursuit of my missing servants. Three

* I have since supposed that he was alluding to the wound in the throat which I had given one of my assailants.

others took hatchets and a spade, and retired to the adjoining water-course.

Yar Muhummud drew near, and took a seat by my side. Nizaum contrived, very imperfectly, to interpret for me. Pointing to my hand, he said, "You stabbed one of us in the throat, and I cut off your hand. We are now even: your wounds have saved your life. Were you not wounded, I would kill you." This is the leader of the party of horsemen, who, six in number, had shrunk away from the face of a single armed man. He now alluded to the circumstance, with rather ill-placed triumph. "You were very fierce and lofty with me, this morning. You drew your pistols, and had I not retired would have shot me. Will you fight now?" drawing out his sabre.

I pointed to my shattered hand.

"What! you have had enough of it? you will never draw trigger again with that hand. Why did you not turn, as I desired you, in the morning?"

I produced the Khaun Huzurut's letter, and endeavoured to explain, that I was the Khaun's guest and ambassador. He and his companions sat long in consultation, and then returned me the letter, saying, "You should have produced this yesterday morning. But you defied us, and we have wounded you. We will now return you your property, and let you proceed."

I replied that my property was of little consequence. That I would freely bestow it upon them, if they would suffer me to proceed with my people, in safety, to Dahsh Gullah. Cherkush Bae, who was near; and had been paying me many little attentions; supporting my head, which I still could not raise

without swooning, and speaking what seemed words of comfort, now looked in my eyes and said, "Fear nothing, I myself will carry you on my camels to Dahsh Gullah." I give these sayings as we interpreted them at the time. I felt very helpless in the loss of Ali Muhummud; but would not, for the world, have involved him in our difficulties. He, Maimood, and Hajji were still missing; and toward noon, the Kuzzauks who had pursued them returned unsuccessful, and three others mounted and started in the search. Hajji, who was concealed amongst the rocks close by, watched his opportunity, and delivered himself up. The wisest step, perhaps, under his circumstances, as he was still sixty miles from Dahsh Gullah, in a country without food; of the language of which, as well as of that spoken at Dahsh Gullah, he was utterly ignorant.

The Kuzzauks, left upon the ground, now prepared to move. Cherkush Bae, saddling one of his camels, desired me to mount. I gazed around, but saw no preparation for my servants. I made signs to Cherkush Bae, that I could not move without them.

Just then, Yar Muhummud approached, and pointing at a tall, raw-boned ruffian, one of the assailants, who was flourishing the hatchet he had wielded in the late affray, said, "Ahris Mhatoor (*i.e.* Ahris, the hero) is a terrible fellow." This man, younger brother, of Cherkush Bae, became one of the principal actors in the drama. His great strength and courage, made him a man of consequence in those parts; and I afterwards found, that but for him, the others would never have had courage to attack me. Had, therefore, his tent, which is moved every three

days, not been, at the moment I passed, in that precise spot, I should probably have reached the Russian frontier in safety. Upon such slight threads hang the destinies of man. I did not, at the time, know the relationship of Ahris to my preserver; but the hideous and ominous expression of the features, and whole person, of the former, prepossessed me against him.

I earnestly enquired of Cherkush Bae, whether he purposed carrying me to Dahsh Gullah. He replied, "Not now. We go back at present; but I will carry you to the fort, from the spot to which we go." By dint of much entreaty, I persuaded Cherkush Bae, to let my people mount the other camels and ponies; myself mounting a camel, for I could not, with both hands disabled, sit a horse.

My poor Meerza, fearfully disfigured by the blows he had received, his reason lost, his strength exhausted, every joint of his body crippled by bruises, was with much difficulty held upon a camel. Ere half the journey was completed, he was obliged to dismount, and falling heavily upon his face, remained long insensible to every attempt to arouse him. In fact, his case seemed so hopeless, that Summud Khaun chid the person who endeavoured to shake him from his lethargy, saying, "Why disturb his last moments? Let him lie here and die in peace." I was secretly of his mind: but at length the poor creature was lifted up, and re-seated on a pony, a person holding him on either side.

We retraversed part of the road of the day preceding. At a high plain bordering the Caspian, called Soosun Uttah, we were stopped, made to dismount, and allowed to seat ourselves. Some show

of respect was still maintained toward me ; but men, who would have crouched in presence of the meanest of my retinue, now seated themselves at my feet. Yar Muhummud was one of these. I observed that his cowardly, hyæna eye shrank always, like a guilty thing, from mine. Dāna Bae and the young miscreant, his son, came again to ask for their dismissal, and for a letter to the Khaun Huzurut in their favour. This I, of course, refused ; and they were departing in a sullen mood, when Summud Khaun called the younger back, and said, "Where are the 700 Tungas (silver coins of the value of 5*d.* each) that I lodged in your hands ?"

This was the first hint I had ever received of such an insane and selfish act. It was in vain that the young man denied the charge *in toto*, then declared that they were the price of the camels ; the other brigands were delighted at the prospect of fresh booty, and rose to examine his camel furniture. Upon this he brought the bag of silver, which was counted out, and delivered to me. I made it over to Yar Muhummud at once, knowing that such must be its eventual fate ; but he returned it to me, for the present, with a thousand protestations.

The younger guide was enraged beyond measure at losing the reward of his treachery. He glared upon me like some ill-omened bird. He exhausted himself in invectives ; and taking Yar Muhummud apart, whispered in his ear. Yar Muhummud immediately came up to me, and said, "You call yourself an ambassador of the Feringees. All the chiefs of the Feringees wear epaulettes. Let me see yours." I replied, that he would find mine in a tin case amongst my property. Dāna Bae's son had seen me at Mungh

Kishlaurk, dressed in an English surtout without epaulettes, when I expected to meet the Russians. He thought, doubtless, that I had none, and was now disconcerted.

"Ask him," he exclaimed, "whether ambassadors suffer common people, like us, to sit near them?"

"Ambassadors," I replied, "as well as kings, have no choice of their company, when prisoners."

Again he took Yar Muhummud aside, and whispered. Yar Muhummud immediately came and demanded of me the sling which supported my shattered hand, and which, being a crimson silk scarf, was valuable in the eyes of those savages. I had no substitute for it; but (as the Arabian Nights have it) just then "To hear was to obey," and I begged Nizaum to take it from my neck and give it up. Here, however, the other brigands interfered, thinking probably that this was a partial method of dividing the booty. Summud Khaun called to Dāna Bae, as the latter prepared to quit us, and said, "Take with you the curse of the Koraun, which shall smite and wither you, and your offspring. These men have injured us under misapprehension, supposing us Russians and enemies. But you knew us to be the guests of your Khaun. You, when we were guests under your own roof, and lying side by side with your children, swore upon the Word of God the most solemn oaths of fidelity, and then sold us into the hands of these men. Be assured that the curse of the Word of God will smite you." Dāna Bae slunk away, amid the curses and execrations of all: even the other Kuzzauks joined in cursing such a foul traitor. His son still lingered, bent upon mischief, shooting the most malignant glances upon me; unfortunately, his power of mischief

was still considerable over prisoners ignorant of the language of the country, the objects, alike, of the avarice and fear of all.

Whilst sitting thus, awaiting the next turn in the tide of our destiny, I took opportunity to sound Cherkush Bae, and to represent, as well as our miserable Toorkish vocabulary would allow, the nature of my office as an ambassador, and a guest of his sovereign. Cherkush Bae heard me with a smile; and one of the Kuzzauks, grasping the forefinger of his left in his right hand, said, "So much we care for an Eelchie, and so much," changing the fore for the little finger, "for the Khaun Huzurut." This was rather comforting, for I knew they cared the thickness of a thigh for our betrayer, Hussun Mhatoor.

Two Kuzzauk detachments of laden camels now arrived, bearing the tents, women, and children of Cherkush Bae and Ahris Mhatoor. The tents were pitched, and half the wall of another tent was erected, to screen us from the piercing wind. The baggage being piled at the entrance of this semi-circular wall, formed a kind of enclosure, into which I beckoned my servants. We were now brothers in misfortune. The Meerza was still utterly insensible.

The women lighted a fire, and boiled my rice and meat for their dinner. Several Kuzzauks sat always at the entrance of my little enclosure. The younger guide, watching his opportunity, when only Yar Muhummud was present, and when I was reclining on my left elbow, my throat quite exposed in the most tempting of attitudes for a headsman, began whispering in Yar Muhummud's ear; both looked fixedly at me. It was not difficult for me to comprehend what the young miscreant was saying. Yar

Muhummud was the man who wounded me, and could scarcely hope for life should I survive and escape. As the fiend insinuated, the Kuzzauk seemed more and more tempted. The act, indeed, would be deemed good service by all, although none dared execute it. He hesitated, he drew the blade half out, he felt the edge with his thumb, then glanced at my throat, then at the blade, whilst the tempter, seeing his advantage, pressed keener and keener his arguments and encouragements, until his eyes seemed absolutely on fire with malice. I would not stir. It was a clean death, and a worse might be the substitute ; but I fixed my eyes firmly upon Yar Muhummud's, and saw *his* quail beneath the stare. He shuffled, looked up, looked down, returned the sword to its scabbard, and evidently had lost the resolution. Just then Cherkush Bae arrived. The fiend, with countenance fallen and malice disappointed, upbraided Yar Muhummud for his infirmity. The moment of weakness was past. The opportunity had escaped him.

When the food was ready, Cherkush Bae brought some to me. We had no stomach it may be supposed ; I least of all ; but I exhorted my people to eat, and set them the example. I told them they must husband their strength for any emergency ; that opportunity of escape might be lost, if their vigour were impaired. It was a sad and solemn meal ; it was probably to be my last. When night fell, Ahris Mhatoor piled up the baggage, so as more completely to enclose us ; then placed outside armed sentinels, himself still wielding the hatchet he had used in his attack on our party, and stalking about with his usual hideous grimace. The whole aspect of this man was ominous

and dreadful. He seemed made by nature for the perpetration of enormities, and yet I do not believe this was his character, although certainly he was reckless, selfish, and faithless. But he was introduced to me under circumstances peculiarly unfavourable, and it was not astonishing that I should receive an exaggerated impression. With the most violent and threatening gesticulations, he gave us to understand that we should be murdered, if we stepped beyond the limits of our shelter. He was then retiring, when Nizaum called him back, to whistle in his ears soft promises and dulcet flattery, in a jargon of which the sole intelligible words were "yes, no, good, bad," all the verbs, substantives, pronouns, etc. being formed by gesture and grimace. Love, however, had formerly taught Nizaum to make the most of such scanty elements ; and fear, and I verily believe attachment to me, now rendered him eloquent after a fashion.

"Yar Muhummud," said Ahris Mhatoor, "is a bad man (Yummun, Yummun). He wishes to murder your master ; it was he who wounded him, and he dares not now suffer him to live." For my part, I did not think that Yar Muhummud had courage to attack even an unarmed man in broad daylight and face to face ; whereas, there was about Ahris Mhatoor a boldness, a promptitude, a restlessness, that caused him ever to take the lead ; and should there be any bloody work to transact, he would inevitably be chief performer. Although far from being the richest or most considerable man of the gang, everyone yielded to him ; even over his elder and richer brother Cherkush Bae, he maintained the ascendancy due to extreme energy. The other was calm, courageous,

immoveable in his determinations ; by nature a noble and a beautiful character. At present, I knew of him little more than his whisper of extreme eagerness, "Have you gold?" had informed me, as I lay wounded on the earth. Upon this I desired Nizaum and Summud to work ; to surrender to him whatever money they could not conceal ; with promises of abundant increase, should he render us service. We had not yet been regularly stripped and examined, and part of my gold had escaped their search. I now made Summud Khaun and Nizaum divide this gold into shares, and distribute it amongst all the servants, as a means of escape, rendering each independent of the others. As for myself, I was not in a condition to attempt escape, and therefore had use for none. I desired each to look after himself, and not think of me, whom it was impossible either to carry with them or to aid by remaining. I had made up my mind, I said, if my life were spared, to see a little of Kuzzauk life, and feed sheep and camels upon the steppe. I should at least acquire a useful language, and read a new page in life.

When night had fallen, and I found opportunity of speaking quietly to Nizaum, I extorted from him a solemn promise that, in case of my death and his escape, he would bear to Major Todd for my mother the assurance that my last thoughts had been of her and of my home.

Nizaum readily promised to execute my orders ; and I found my mind calmer after this last preparation.

In the first edition of this work, I had unwarily published, word for word as found in my private journal, all the feelings and events of this night ; but

they are scarcely subjects of interest to the public. Suffice it that, from the circumstances of our position, and the bearing and words of our captors, I did not think it would have passed without violence. While, therefore, my servants slept, I watched as before; for I felt assured I could offer such arguments for saving their lives and restoring them to their country as must be unanswerable, could I but get opportunity of speech with those who might offer them violence or carry them into slavery. The night, however, passed without incident, excepting that twice the sounds of approaching footsteps were heard, and that shouts came from the tent of Ahris Mhatoor. It was, upon the whole, a more weary night than the preceding. Yet it had its own sense of sublimity, baffling all expression: for I stood on the brink of eternity, and a few minutes might make me wiser than the wisest of the children of men.

CHAPTER XXV.

Capture of Maimood and Ali Muhummud—Consultations of our Captors—Third Night of Captivity—Further Consultation—Harassing Demands—Division of Booty—The Blandishments of Beauty out of her Teens—Sentiment of Sheep's Tails—Delicacy and Sympathy of Kuzzauk Women—Misery of our Position this Day—The Poor Meerza's View of the Case—Further Partition of Spoils—Recovery of the Royal Presents—Rape of the Cloak and the Kerchief—Three of my Suite taken off as Slaves—Rescue of Nizaum—Survey of Summud Khaun—State of my Wounds—New Guide to Mecca—Lamentable Want of Religious Fury amongst the Kuzzauks.

AT daylight, many Kuzzauks from neighbouring Khails, collected to stare at us, and afterwards consult as to our disposal. Great anxiety was expressed, for the return of my interpreter, Ali Muhummud. But, although very helpless without him, I earnestly trusted that he and Maimood, the groom, had escaped. At noon this hope was frustrated. Maimood was brought back by a party of Kuzzauks; and soon afterwards, Ali Muhummud himself appeared, bound, and slightly wounded. They stated, that being struck down in the first assault, they had crept into a thicket, whence they had witnessed the conclusion of the affray. They heard a pistol fired, which inspired them with some hope; but, soon after, a Kuzzauk had passed, dressed in my garments, which persuaded them that I was slain. At daybreak they

pursued the route towards Dahsh Gullah, and had already travelled more than half the distance, when they were pursued, fired at, taken, mercilessly beaten and wounded. Poor fellows, our greeting was mournful indeed.

The assembled Kuzzauks now made a hearty meal of my mutton, rice, and sugar, the two latter articles being great luxuries in their eyes ; and then, forming a circle, consulted how they should dispose of us. All we could learn, was an imperfect report that, there being a general order in force, that Russian prisoners should be sent alive to Khiva, their goods being the property of the captors, they proposed so to dispose of us.

The consultations lasted until night. We were then secured as before. I had been conversing with my people, upon the extreme improbability of the Kuzzauks committing such a blunder as to spare me ; and endeavouring to prepare them for my death, and for their own condition as slaves, when I should be gone ; authorising them to offer, in the name of the Envoy at Heraut, any sum as their ransom. They resisted the notion, and I was in the very act of giving my reasons, when six of the brigands approached slowly, entered our little circle in silence, and deliberately arming themselves, half drew their swords, and felt the edges with their fingers. It was a moment of strange suspense. I perceived in the eyes of all my people, that a single impression was common to all, as they sat breathless around me. The Kuzzauks lingered some time, eyeing us without uttering a word, and then departed to Ahris Mhatoor's tent, as slowly as they had come. Again I sat up all night, to watch over the safety of my

people. Once or twice, I was startled by wild halloos, but they proved to be no more than the efforts of Kuzzauks to awaken the dogs that guard their sheep. The baying and swift footfalls of these guardians of the night might be heard in full chase of a wolf or a fox. But even this night had its morning, the morning of the most trying day it was our lot to witness.

The Kuzzauks early assembled, and again sat in consultation. They betrayed less respect than ever for my person. One of them had the effrontery to put on my uniform close in front of me. I appealed to Cherkush Bae ; for I felt the extreme importance of preserving what remained of my dignity. He chased away the intruder. A violent fellow, who had been in close conference with our younger guide, commenced a violent dispute with the youth who had assumed my garments : and at length became so furious, that making at the young man, he boxed his ears, and tore the clothes from his back. This, I well understood, was from no love to me. The denuded Kuzzauk mounted one of my horses, and galloped off.

One of our greatest torments had been the constant demand, made by Kuzzauks, for some article of our equipment, whether of dress or horse-furniture. This, my people were obliged to find for them every five minutes, and to receive back when their caprice was satisfied. These demands were now made with increased assiduity. Sometimes, I had to rise, whilst a Kuzzauk examined the carpet upon which I sat, and again threw it down in a heap before me. Sometimes, I was desired to surrender my furred cloak, which was an object much coveted by all. In

the last case, I always appealed to Cherkush Bae or Ahris Mhatoor, for I was aware that even "Majesty" will not bear the loss of externals. They readily interfered, to prevent my being stripped.

My property was now collected in a heap. The bags were opened, and the Kuzzauks seated themselves around them. Ahris Mhatoor, hatchet in hand, cried in a loud voice to each of our assailants in turn, to come and choose. After a pause, and some consultation, Ali Muhummud was called and directed to select and set apart his own horse, arms, and clothes. I feared that they were about to form lots, for the distribution of each individual with his arms and goods: but it proved, that Ali had declared himself to be a servant of the Ghoosh Beegie* of Khiva, and that they feared to molest him. The selection went on rapidly. First, were chosen the cloth cloaks, then those of silk, then the pieces of broad cloth, afterwards coverlets, swords, and inferior articles; and last, my Cashmere shawl, of which none knew the use or value.

Whilst this business proceeded rapidly, an old woman of ninety years, mother of Cherkush and Ahris, toddled up to my little forlorn circle. I made her take a seat. She smiled upon me lovingly, calling me her Chiraug, literally, "lamp"; and it must be remembered, that Kuzzauk lamps are fed with the fat of Doombha tails, a circumstance that somewhat perplexes the sentiment. Nevertheless, as the Chiraug is their only light, it has become their fondest term of endearment.

* Ghoosh Beegie—literally "Lord of Fowls." That is, Chief Fowler or Falconer, the second office in the State, the first being the Mehtur, or Lord of the Horse.

“Ah, my Chiraug,” said the ancient dame, with a smile of blandishment; “are all these goods yours?”

“They were mine just now.”

“And all these servants?”

“Yes!”

“How rich you are. Pray give me a gift, a cloak, or a shirt, or a silk kerchief!”

I assured her I had no longer power over the goods; but she replied, “Ah, my lamp, I *must* have something. Some little gift.”

I pointed to the Kuzzauks, and recommended her to ask them, and off she stumped on the errand. I soon perceived that her eloquence had been rewarded with a cloak, which one of the Kuzzauks threw over her shoulders. Several other women came to condole with us, and to beg of me gifts. There was something ludicrous, yet infinitely chilling, in all this. It was the triumph of avarice over feelings naturally tender. It was, as if one of our delicate European females should approach the live ox, from which a Tartar had just cut his beefsteak, saying, “Ah! my poor pet, my heart bleeds for you; just stand, whilst I cut a leetle slice from your shoulder.” The Kuzzauk women shed tears over our melancholy condition, and ere they were dry, plundered us of the few miserable articles, which their sons and husbands had left us.

Our condition throughout this day was truly wretched. A state of torturous suspense which no certainty can equal. Despair, like those acids which destroy the nerves, arms the heart with an insensible panoply, proof against further suffering. Suspense is a demon, that lacerates without deadening the

nerves, and wreaks its spite upon the most sensitive and least vital portions of the soul. Some of my horses had been at once carried off. Two or three had been left, but in a condition so wretched, that it was misery to behold them. Two or three days' hard work, without food, had reduced them to skeletons. The poor Meerza, whenever for a moment wakened from his lethargy, enquired after his horse. "Aye, Ali Muhummud, where is my horse? Has he been fed? Is he surely fastened? And aye, Ali Muhummud, what are we doing here? It is much better to be moving. I feel bruised all over. Look at my hands! What can be the matter with them? and my head is so heavy, that I can scarcely hold it up. Aye, Ali Muhummud, where is the Word of God? Are you sure it is safe? Let us get on quickly to Dahsh Gullah. It is useless to loiter here. Aye, Ali Muhummud, someone has taken my whip: I don't see it. What can have become of it?"

To all this, Ali Muhummud, whose extreme good nature had made him, as we have seen, the servant of several of my suite, could only reply, "Aye, Meerza, we are as it has pleased God to ordain. Ask no questions, but go to sleep again." The Meerza, after two or three more ejaculations, obeyed an injunction, which the injury his brain had sustained rendered imperative. We found the poor Meerza's whip, and gave it him. He stuck it in his girdle, and for a fortnight afterwards it served to abate his anxiety to be moving: for when his hand fell upon it, he was persuaded that preparations for the journey were in progress. Poor fellow! the first four days he lay motionless, in a dead sleep, from which it was scarcely possible to arouse him. When wakened, he would eat

nothing, and resisted all our efforts and persuasions. After some days this lethargy abated; but his wits were gone. It appeared that he had been asleep the night of the attack, and had awakened only in time to be felled by repeated blows upon his bald head, as he attempted to rise. He never, therefore, could understand what had occurred; and as he lost thereby much of the anxiety and suffering *we* endured, we were not over-anxious to inform him. At times, however, a sense of his position dawned upon him, and then much keen cunning was displayed.

When the goods had been distributed, and some fifty rude Kuzzauks made gay with our spoils, two or three of them came and demanded the bag of silver, which the guide had been made to restore. I ordered Summud Khaun to surrender it. It happened, that he had added to the bag ten or fifteen small silver coins, which he now withdrew. Ahris Mhatoor, thinking they were a part of the original sum, drew a sword, and was with difficulty prevented from murdering him. The coins were equally distributed: but Yar Muhummud had contrived to appropriate ten golden pieces belonging to the Meerza.

When Ali Muhummud first returned, after explaining more fully the nature of my mission, I had begged the Kuzzauks be careful of the sabre and jewelled dagger and harness, entrusted to me by the Khaun Huzurut; as well as all the papers in my possession. I made them welcome to everything else, upon condition of their immediately conveying me and my people to Dahsh Gullah; search was made for the articles. The sabre and dagger were soon found. The former was openly worn, in utter ignorance of its value, by the young fellow who had

paraded in my uniform. A side-blow from a club had, however, ruined its symmetry. The dagger was also discovered, without much difficulty; the brigand who had torn it from my side, not conjecturing that its rich jewels were anything more precious than glass; but the harness was long in appearing, not that the gold and jewels with which it was studded were recognised as such, but because it was a piece of finery of extreme value in the eyes of a nation of horsemen. The dagger, in spite of my remonstrances, was returned to me, for as I had now no longer the means of guarding it, I did not like to be burthened with the responsibility. Fifty times a day, it was in the hands of some rude Kuzzauk, who would draw, handle, examine, and afterwards return it.

As soon as the division of spoils was complete, and whilst I and my people awaited our sentence, with no enviable feelings, the violent fellow who had despoiled his companion of my garments, stepped up to me, and insisted upon having my furred cloak. I remonstrated. He drew his sword, and gave me the choice of death or surrender of the garment. I accordingly stripped it, or rather caused my servants to strip it from my shoulders, and he carried it off in triumph. Yar Muhummud followed, and took from me the sling which supported my shattered hand; and as the remainder of my garments were sufficiently costly in their eyes, I expected to have been left naked.

Just then a boy of thirteen years, son of Ahris Mhatoor, approached me. He had previously visited me several times, and by his smile of encouragement, led me sometimes to hope that mercy would be shewn

us. He now took me by the hand, and led me into his father's tent. The old Meerza followed, but some of my people were arrested in the attempt, and forced to remain without. Summud Khaun and Ali Mummud were taken to Cherkush Bae's tent. The women and children shewed me many little attentions. They consisted of the ancient dame already mentioned, Ahris Mhatoor's wife, a woman of forty, who must have been handsome, the boy of thirteen, a girl of eleven, and four other children, of whom the youngest was an infant. Maimood, the groom, soon followed me, bathed in tears. "They are carrying me off to slavery," he said. I remonstrated earnestly, but to no purpose. He knelt down and covered my hands with tears. I laid my hand upon his head, and commended him to God's keeping. He was then dragged away. Hajji and Yakoob shared a similar fate. Yakoob and Maimood were bosom friends, and their separation from one another was a most mournful sight. Even the rude Kuzzauks were moved. But when they would have led away Nizaum also, he escaped into the tent, and throwing himself at my feet, exclaimed, "Aye, Sahib, Sahib, all my hope is with you. I have left my widowed mother to follow your steps. Do not suffer them to separate me from you." I made a last effort, and laying my hand upon the shoulder of Ahris Mhatoor, besought him, in the most earnest manner, to spare Nizaum. He hesitated. I renewed my pleading. At length he yielded, saying, "If you have any money, give it to satisfy those to whose lot Nizaum has fallen." I consulted Nizaum, and found, to my great joy, that a bag of Russian silver had escaped their search. I made him surrender it to Ahris, who divided it amongst the claimants.

These, however, were not yet satisfied. They took a survey of the rest of my suite. The poor old Meerza was mere carrion; and Ali Muhummud, under his assumed character of servant of the Ghoosh Beegie, they dared not touch. Summud Khaun was keenly scrutinized. His grey beard, which had been dyed a jetty black on leaving Khiva, was now shewing sundry autumnal tints of bright orange, where the indigo had given place to the henna. He was a seedy-looking fellow, full of groans, and wealthy in old cloaks and measureless inexpressibles. They didn't half fancy him. One of them, however, after a long examination of his beard, and perplexed comparison of it with his physiognomy (for dyes are unknown to the Kuzzauks), enquired his age; and as he is not much past fifty, he coolly answered five and twenty; vanity, for the moment, mastering his habitual caution. This produced a shout of merriment, which made the tent ring. Fortunately, he was not believed; and his apparent utter helplessness disinclined anyone to the burthen of feeding one, whose jaw appeared his most active member, and who was so fundamentally objectionable. I afterwards asked Summud, what *could* induce him to tell so barefaced and impolitic a lie. He declared it was no lie. That when asked his age, he considered that the age of his manhood was intended, and dated accordingly from the full growth of his beard. The parting was very mournful. So long as we were together, all seemed not lost. We were a mutual support and solace.

This business discussed, Cherkush Bae came to examine and dress my hand. The first day and two nights it had been tied up with no attention to the

position of fingers, or the bringing together of the lips of wounds. The second day I had made Nizaum renew the bandages, and place the members in some shape. Cherkush now handled it with great tenderness; but I foresaw, that for want of proper ligatures, the middle finger, which was hanging on, would be lost. I begged him to glue strips of paper from the finger to the hand, to keep it in position, and prevent the ends of the bone from chafing one another. My ignorance of the language rendered it impossible for me to convince him of the necessity of this, and the finger was eventually lost. To the wound he applied burnt alum, which gave much pain, and I think did no good. Over the alum he spread a tent of scraped leather, and he supported the disjunct thumb upon a splint of wood. My other sabre cuts, of which I had three, were mere scratches. I never knew how I received them, for the blow of a sabre and that of a stick produced nearly the same sensation, and the night was too dark for the eye to distinguish one weapon from another. A rag, that had once flourished in the coarse petticoat of my hostess, profoundly ignorant of the watery element, for an unknown number of years, was now, after a soaking in melted snow, adjusted as a sling to my arm. Even this miserable wreck of an ancient petticoat was almost daily captured from me, and recovered with difficulty; so destitute is this primitive race of what we consider the coarsest articles of comfort.

My pocket sextant was brought to me, and its use demanded. I declined answering, for necromancy was one of the charges against me; and a solar observation would have been the very grandfather of the forbidden art. Ali Muhummud replied for me,

that it was a Kibla Noomàh, or compass pointing out Mecca. This greatly delighted them; and if their prayers have not made, through means of it, successful voyages, it is neither my fault nor Ali Muhummud's. My ignorance of the language sometimes saved me great embarrassment; for, as Ali's safety was dependent upon mine, he was careful never to interpret for me any part of a question which might have elicited from me a dangerous reply; at least, from observation of gestures and countenances, I was inclined sometimes to suspect such to be the case; and it is probable that he occasionally took liberties with my replies. Not many searching questions, however, were put. For these simple shepherds are quite ignorant of those nice distinctions of faith upon which more civilized nations damn and murder one another. They take it for granted, that everyone who worships one only God must be a good Moosulmaun, and that all others are Kawfurs or infidels; of whom they naturally enough conclude the Koozulbaush* (an epithet embracing the whole Persian nation) to be the most venomous, because nearest themselves in faith, and within reach of their forays.

* Koozulbaush—literally "Red-head," derived from the red lining which breaks through the conical lambskin cap of the Perso-Tartar clan Afshar. This clan lying nearest of the Persians to Khaurism, "Koozulbaush" has become synonymous with "Persian."

CHAPTER XXVI.

Inmates of Ahris Mhatoor's Tent—The buxom old Girl of Ninety-five—Her Relish of Bon-bons—Ahris' Wife, Children, and Dogs—Kuzzauk Diet—Voracity—Contempt of Medicines—Rescue of the Cloak—First Night as Prisoners in a Kuzzauk Household—Hopeless Prospect around me—Melancholy induced thereby—Cherkush Bae—His Wife's Pity for me, and Love of my Apparel—Humanity of Kuzzauk Maidens, how evinced—How by civilized Ladies—Persons of my People searched—Meerza's Astuteness—Summud Khaun's Wit—False Alarm—Change Camp—Intrigue for our Liberation—Resolution of the Grey Beards—Negotiations for our Release—Again shift Camp.

I HAVE already enumerated the inmates of Ahris Mhatoor's tent. The old lady lay at my head. She was prodigal of her personal charms; and we had difficulty in convincing her, that garments were either useful or ornamental. She made Ali, in front of us all, about the coolest proposition I ever heard from a lady of ninety-five. She had a little pet whim, which sometimes rather disgusted me. When on any grand occasion a sheep was slain, the head was her morsel. She gnawed it well over-night, and then popped it under her pillow, as children dispose of sugar-plums, to be the subject of her dreams all night, and her first waking care. The gnawing of this sheep's head, with all its horrible appurtenances, eyes, ears, tongue, and brain, would at any other time have sickened as well as horrified me. But hardship is a good tutor, and

the simple milk diet of the Kuzzauk leaves no irritability to the nerves of the stomach. The sight was very hideous. I sometimes fancied I had fallen from my grade in the creation, and become the mate of wolves and hyænas.

At other times, I speculated upon mutton-eating in general. I figured to myself the most lovely of our English ladies, in a state of nature, and in a land possessing, like this, neither fruit nor vegetable, but an abundance of fat-tailed sheep. I imagined a call from the larder. How would it be answered? She goes forth into the steppe, she climbs the most elevated point. She throws her wild keen eye around the horizon. She sinks suddenly to the earth. She has spied her fleecy prey. She creeps cautiously, on all fours, along the steppe, her dishevelled locks droop to the earth. Her eye, so blue of late, is suffused with blood, it shoots through those long locks, tongues of fire. It is a comet, consuming the azure of heaven. See how she winds and crouches, for the shelter of the smallest bush, or tuft, or hollow. The sentinel of the muttons is beginning to stare. He smells something very like a rat. He twinkles his yellow eye. He wrinkles his forehead. He doesn't half like it; would not take upon his conscience to declare, &c. &c. He swings his tail like the great bell of Moscow. He is just about to feather it, has actually collected wind into his lungs to utter that redoubtable "Baa-a," and lifted his foot for that decisive stamp, at which the whole army will take flight; when he feels a something tickling his ear, and stealing into the fattest cockle of his heart. What *can* it be? The very voice of his own little son and heir. His Benjamin, the child of his old age, the picture,

the living image of himself. His heart is melted. He looks affectionately toward the sound. A keen red gleam of fire shoots through him, like a red-hot spit, curdling his very tallow. What can it be? His doubt lends a dash of the sublime to his parental emotions: he puts back his head just to scratch his backbone with the tip of the right horn. In an instant, the wild creature is upon them. Scarcely has he time to utter the first letter of his Baa, or wish his huge tail at Jericho; so imminent is the peril, so headlong the flight. One, two, aerial bounds! Beautiful, graceful, mischievous creature, where learned ye that *pas de zephyr*? A third. She is upon him, even him, the genius and the hope of the flock. Her snow-white feet are on his woolly back, her lily hands are busy with his throat. He speeds, he lashes his tail, he roars with a roar that would addle the wits of the bravest mutton. It dies into a gurgle. It ceases. He falls heavily to the earth. Those beauteous arms around his throat, those taper fingers on his windpipe. He kicks—once, twice, thrice. He was no common mutton! She purrs over him with delight. She gnaws one leetle hole just under his ear. *There* are pressed her ruby lips. Her warm sweet breath will surely fan him to life. Has she let blood for this purpose? Is it remorse, soft pity that moves her? Look at her eye, and consider: for I can follow her no farther. Is this woman, lovely woman? No! Thanks to him who invented butchers, it is *not*.

My hostess, Ahris' wife, was a thoroughly good woman. She had protested against the attack upon me, and now did her utmost to alleviate our sufferings, lavishing upon me a thousand trifling attentions, which my situation rendered very acceptable. I

shared with her children, equally, the food she possessed; and if by accident, any Kuzzauk from the Russian frontier brought a handful of coarse meal into the tent, a Benjamin's portion of the little cake, cooked from it, was ever mine.

Two dogs completed the circle of this tent, in which the Meerza, Nizaum, and myself were prisoners. But we seldom lay down to rest with less than one or two guests. The beds consisted of Nummuds, or thick felts, full of lice, upon which the person of a female was deposited, *en chemise*, that of a man in a state of innocence. The cloak of sheepskin was drawn over the person, and if more covering were necessary, it was, in like manner, found, in the clothes worn by day. Darkness served as a dressing-room to all parties.

The sheep, to the number of five hundred, about seven female camels, and a pony; all the property of the two brothers, were collected at night near the tent, and slept there, under the protection of four or five large dogs. The milk of the sheep and camels formed the sole sustenance of the two families. When brought home, it was poured into the large cauldron so often mentioned, and heated by a fire of brushwood. As soon as the scum was formed, the children collected around it, brandishing each a wooden spoon, which passed from mouth to milk, and from milk to mouth with the utmost celerity, until the scum formed upon the milk was quite consumed. It was then poured warm into the skin which had contained the curds of the preceding day; the acid of which curdled the fresh supply. It is in this form alone that milk is consumed by the Kuzzauks. It was at first very disagreeable to my palate; but habit and hunger soon

taught me to deem it delicious. An addition of five open mouths to the household, induced our hostess to add a moiety of snow-water to the aliment, by way of eking out the quantity. This, of course, was no improvement. Cheese and butter I have never seen in Kuzzauk tents, although the former is made by Toorcumuns: and cream were too expensive an article for any but the wealthy: for the miserable pasture of the steppe can yield but a poor return in milk.

At long intervals, a sheep is slain, cut up with wondrous celerity, and tossed warm and almost alive into the cauldron. It is then eaten without any accompaniment of bread, rice, or vegetable; things, which the country does not produce, and which are purchased, at a heavy expense, in very small quantities, on the Russian frontier. Two hours or so after the death of the sheep, not a vestige of it remains. The very bones are chewed, and pieces of the skin are fried in the embers and eaten. No provision is left for the unfortunate dogs; and the steppe produces none. I never could understand how they subsisted. During winter, when the supply of milk fails, the Kuzzauks live greatly upon the flesh of their flocks and herds, which they salt and dry for the purpose. But I confess, it is an enigma to me, how this supply can ever suffice, without aid of grain or vegetables; for I have been present, many times, at the discussion of an entire sheep, when milk was abundant, and have never known a particle of the flesh left for a second meal: so that, during three or four months of the year, a sheep would be requisite every day, for the subsistence of a household; undoubtedly, large numbers *are* consumed during the winter, which

renders strict economy necessary during the spring and summer months.

The milk diet is so conducive to health, that disease is a thing unknown to the Kuzzauks; and when, upon opening a packet of my medicines, I endeavoured to explain the use of them, they had great difficulty in even comprehending my meaning, and cast the drugs away as useless. They have, nevertheless, great faith in all vulnerary applications; several of which, as isinglass, alum, vitriol, they procure from Russia. The effect of the milk diet upon myself was peculiar. A draught of curds produced the exhilaration of nerves which is experienced from a cup of tea or coffee; and heaviness never followed the most copious potation. Indeed, my hunger was seldom appeased, so great was the extra demand occasioned by myself and people.

When Ahris Mhatoor perceived that I had been robbed of my cloak, and understood the circumstances, he sallied forth with a Kuzzauk whip in his hand, of the thickness of three ordinary fingers, and, overtaking the spoiler, belaboured him until he surrendered it. I begged him to accept it for his pains, but he was ashamed to do so, although evidently under strong temptation; and I, knowing the importance of preserving a decent exterior, did not press him beyond a certain point. He, however, had no scruple in making Summud Khaun surrender a handsome cloak, which *he* wore, and which Ahris immediately appropriated.

In the tent with me was the old Meerza; in the other tent lay Summud Khaun, Ali Muhummud, Cherkush Bae, his old wife, and grown-up daughter, the latter a raw-boned, square, and crimson-faced

damsel, of some two and twenty years. Night fell, and we lay down to rest. Sleep in my case was impossible, owing to the pain of my shattered hand, and my dread lest the dogs occupying the tent should touch it in passing; for more than a month I could not rest it upon my body or the earth, but at night propped it in an upright posture upon the elbow.

Night passed, and morning dawned. I went forth, and sat upon a fragment of earth upon the desolate plain, whilst the women lighted the fire, and milked the sheep and camels. A drizzling rain was falling. The weather was in keeping with my thoughts. Presently, Cherkush Bae approached, bearing a wooden bowl filled with mahss (curdled milk). He offered it with a smile of encouragement that went to my heart. I lived upon this man's smiles during the remainder of my captivity. I divided the bowl with my servants; and, that they might never be neglected, as inferior in importance to myself, I made it an invariable custom to share with them all, even to the most trifling article of comfort, that at any time fell to my lot. I found every member of the two families anxious that we should want for nothing with which they could supply us.

Many Kuzzauks visited the tent this day, some of them men of rank amongst that wild race. One of them, a very handsome man, of very unprepossessing countenance, protested in strong terms against the sin and shame of attacking an ambassador. "Yes," replied I, when Ali Muhummud had interpreted his words, "he has not shared in the plunder." I was amused with the conduct of the women with whom we dwelt. Whilst shedding tears of sympathy over our

misfortunes and my sufferings, they were cutting up our clothes into dresses for themselves, and stealing from us every trifling article which their husbands had spared. Cherkush Bae's wife would come and kneel at my feet, and weep over me; but in the midst of her tears, her hands stole involuntarily to my cloak, which she fingered with equal tenderness and affection. I fancied I could hear her say, "Poor thing! what a very soft skin it has. What a pity that it must die! What a pity that it should die out of *our* tent!" One day, when I was disgusted to an unusual degree by those crocodile tears, I made Ali translate to the lady her own sentiment. She was dreadfully shocked; yet the fingers could not leave off fingering the furred cloak. Her daughter's sympathy betrayed itself in a more amiable and less questionable manner. If she saw me fairly nonplussed, through my crippled condition, in the endeavour to free myself from those intruders, whose name was "Legion," she would fly across the tent to my rescue, dodge the intruder into a corner, seize him by the nape of the neck, and send his indignant spirit full trot to the shades below. A civilized maiden would shew her humanity by cracking a heart. The fair Kuzzauk evinced hers by cracking a l—. I leave it to philosophers and divines to judge between them.

Many Kuzzauks this day crowded the tent to stare at us. Nizaum had yielded up cash after having been searched. It struck them that there might be more. Nizaum was examined, but nothing was found upon him. The Meerza was next stripped, and we sat in breathless suspense, awaiting the result, for he had thirty ducats of his own and thirty gold coins of mine in a belt around his loins, and, as he was quite de-

ranged, it seemed improbable that this money should escape the spoilers. But an Asiatic's wits must be far gone, indeed, to desert him when money is at stake. Although he had hitherto lain quite helpless, and almost insensible, recovering only from time to time, sufficiently to betray the complete derangement of his intellect, yet now he acted his part with the most consummate skill. There were at least a dozen pair of eyes searching him keenly, and hands were passing over his body and garments from head to foot. He fought his way peevishly, step by step. Not a garment was yielded without a battle, and the multiplicity of wrappers being each in turn examined without effect, the searchers began to despair. Still there remained the nethermost garment, but this the old gentleman would not suffer to be removed; and at length, even the Kuzzauks were ashamed to insist upon his open exposure. They passed their hands carefully over his body, but decency prevented them from hitting the golden vein; and, to our great relief, almost amusement, we saw them retreat, completely baffled, and the old man resume his garments, and reseal himself at my side. This, however, was the utmost effort his reason was capable of. The instant he found himself dressed, he began to whisper in my ear, in a voice that rang through the tent, "I've got your thirty tillas round my waist, and my own thirty ducats. I tell you, but won't tell anyone else." I touched him, and signed to him with my eyes to be silent, but all was lost upon him. "Tilla" and "bh'joglie,"* names well known to the Kuzzauks, rang

* Tilla, literally "gold," is the name of the gold coins of Khiva and Bokhara. "Bh'joglie" is applied to the ducat on account of the figure of Mercury which it bears, "Bh'joglie" signifying "demon."

loudly, attracting the attention of all the women; the very whisper at that moment was sufficient to excite suspicion. Fortunately the men were at this time utterly bewildered in the numberless unmentionables, cloaks, &c. of Summud Khaun. He too had money; where, I know not, for every garment he possessed was in itself a labyrinth; the search of *one* would have occupied a week, and their number seemed infinite. He, too, was more than a match at this work for a dozen Kuzzauks. He growled and snarled at them, right and left, and fairly bullied them into the belief that he had nothing. It was evident that the work was new to the Kuzzauks, for they did not prosecute it in a masterly manner.

The old Meerza continued during the remainder of the day to doze and wake alternately, losing no opportunity of whispering to me the secret of his possession. I perceived that there was no safety in leaving the gold upon him, the more especially as it seemed improbable that he should long survive the violence he had suffered, when the money would be seized by the Kuzzauks. I therefore determined to relieve him of the charge of my thirty gold pieces at the earliest opportunity, still leaving him the richest of the party.

Another day wore away, and another night. Another morning dawned upon us, and again I was seated upon the rock, looking over that dark, desolate plain, wrapped in a sense of utter helplessness, and vainly endeavouring to shape some means of deliverance. Ahris Mhatoor passed me, matchlock in hand: I perceived that the match was lighted. He set up a horse's skull upon a stick, as a sign-post to warn any who should seek the family, after their departure, of

the direction they had pursued on breaking up camp. Ahris, soon after, mounted a horse and rode off, and the women pulled down the tents, and packed them and their goods upon the camels. The sheep and lambs were entrusted to the children. One of my horses was found for me. The Meerza was placed upon a camel; but the rest of my people were obliged to walk.

“This is sad work for you, Nizaum,” I said, as he led my horse, which my bandaged hands prevented me from guiding; “your horse, too, will scarcely like a change of masters.”

Nizaum had one answer for every occasion. “It is my destiny, Sahib; and whatever is a man’s destiny comes to pass.”

This is a piece of rare philosophy very comforting to some minds. It is, as if one should say to *him*, whose head is just broken by a hammer, “Iron is iron, and bone is bone, therefore be content.”

A spot being found near the brink of the cliffs, where the snow was still retained in certain hollows, and where young grass was springing, the women pitched the two tents, whilst the children drove the sheep and lambs, in separate flocks, to pasture. Whilst the women were thus engaged, I seized the opportunity, and taking my people to some little distance, demanded of the Meerza the money he had in charge. The forlorn state of his intellect placed us in some jeopardy, for he did not like relinquishing his charge, and spoke loudly in answer to my enquiries. It was, however, at length accomplished, and I divided the thirty gold pieces amongst my people, so as to make nearly an equal distribution of funds to all.

Our life in these rude tents was too monotonous to form subject for a diary, unless, indeed, I had detailed daily, whilst fresh in my remembrance, the conversations of the Kuzzauks who visited us, and the hopes and fears to which they gave rise. My own thoughts and feelings, too, under these circumstances, might be curious, for, from my infancy, I have been prone to philosophise, and draw results from the present aspect of circumstances, very different from those which content mankind. But, although I endeavoured at the time to impress such particulars upon my memory, that memory has subsequently been over-tasked, and it is only in particular instances that either the scenes or the thoughts of those days of heaviness are to be recovered.

The mystery of Cherkush Bae's services to me, was now explained. He had an only son, a prisoner at Dahsh Gullah, having been betrayed to the Russians, by the treachery of a comrade. When he heard of the proposition to attack the Russian ambassador, and seize his property, he consented readily to become a party, determining to save the Russian's life, and exchange him for his only son, for whom he had long been pining. Hence his anxiety about me, as I lay wounded on the field of strife, which I had often, but vainly, endeavoured to account for. Hence his emotion, when I spoke of gold, which might purchase the ransom of his child; hence, too, the fact, that whilst the other assailants in the division of booty were handsomely provided for, he and his brother had charged themselves with little more than the burthen of five mouths.

We were not altogether idle. By means of Ali

Muhummud, I endeavoured to place before the eyes of the brothers such hopes as should induce them to take up my cause with zeal, and do something more than give me vague promises of rescue. My desire was to push on to Dahsh Gullah. There lay my duty, my mission was still unfulfilled; and when I calmly weighed together the difficulties of either route, it seemed to me that Khiva was out of the question. I found, however, that this proposition was always most coldly received, and the cause I soon learned.

One night, Ahris Mhatoor (who was generally absent great part of the day), returned late, and had a secret conference with his wife, which Nizaum overheard. She urged him to set us free, and re-conduct us to Khiva, assuring him that he might rely upon my gratitude: that it was evident, from my affection for my servants, that I never forgot a kindness, and that all my people declared this was the character of the English nation.

He replied, that he had just returned from consulting the elders of the tribe, who agreed that the injury I had received was not to be forgiven, and that there was but one way of disposing of him, whom they had so deeply injured.

I lay down to rest this night in the supposition that I should never again rise. I even lay in such a posture that the death-stroke might not awaken me. It had always seemed to me, that the pain of death was a mere want of resolution to die — the last despairing struggle. As, in the case of one whom an infant could disable by a touch upon the mangled and inflamed hand, any such strife must be utterly hopeless, I had, from the first, resolved to suffer

without a struggle. I endeavoured to sleep, but my mind was excited, and the pain of my wound was ever unfavourable to repose. Twice in the night I saw the naked gigantic form of Ahris Mhatoor stride across the crowded tent. I lay perfectly still, controlling my excited fancy. He passed me, and returned to his bed. The night, with all its accompaniments of sublimity and gloom, at length rolled away, and again I blessed the All-merciful for the light of an added day.

I must not omit a melancholy concomitant of my captivity. One of the female camels of Cherkush had lost its young; and the skin, according to the custom of the country, had been stuffed, and was shewn to the camel whenever they wished to milk her. I could not distinctly ascertain the motive of this; but the effect of the contrivance was a constant renewal of the sorrows of the unfortunate mother, which were expressed in a tone so human, so like those of a woman wailing over her only child, that it was impossible to witness them without the most mournful of sensations. The poor thing stood over the image of the lost one, her large dark, languishing eye suffused with tears. Her head drooped towards the object of her grief, and then lifted, to utter that heart-piercing wail; that expression of a grief which *will* not be comforted—of a heart utterly desolate, and beyond cure. Often, as I lay awake from the pain of my wound, those notes of anguish filled the silence of the night.

The day following, I again pressed Ahris Mhatoor to carry us, either to Dahsh Gullah or to Khiva, urging the necessity of despatch in whatever he might resolve upon. He replied, "We should have carried

you, on the first day, to Dahsh Gullah, had you not been wounded. But now, we are at a loss what to do with you; for if *you* forgive us, the Russians will not. A Toorcumun came from Mungh Kishlauk, to tell us that you were a black Russian, a necromancer, and an infidel; and that the Khaun Huzurut had ordered us to kill you, lest you should join your companions, the Yellow Russians, at Dahsh Gullah. We are utterly without blame in this matter."

I replied, that I fully acquitted the Kuzzauks of all blame. That I knew they had acted under false impressions. That if I had received injury from the villain Dāna Bae, yet I had received life, and kindness, and protection from himself and his brother. That as for my wounds, they were received face to face with the enemy, and were not, therefore, dishonest, nor fit subjects of malice towards the inflieter. "If, indeed," I said, laying my hand delicately upon the shrine of honour, "you had touched me up here, I had never forgiven it."

There was a loud shout of laughter at this; but although I believe all were, for the moment, convinced of my sincerity, they still objected, that the Russians would send to ravage their possessions, on learning the violence I had suffered.

I replied, that the Russians were not my people, that I was neither their subject nor ambassador. That they had interests distinct and opposite from those of my nation, that they had neither motive nor inclination to avenge my wrongs. That, if he would conduct me and my people to Dahsh Gullah, I would do my utmost toward the liberation of Cherkush Bae's only son. If to Khiva, I would not only obtain there pardon for the Kuzzauks (excepting always the

guides), but reward him liberally, and give him all the plundered articles he could recover. He listened eagerly to this, and readily promised to conduct me to Khiva upon his own camels.

"Is this a bargain?" he demanded, stretching out one of his huge hands, and making one of his usual very horrible grimaces. I put my bandaged left hand into his, and assured him it *was* a bargain. I had not, however, the slightest faith in his sincerity.

Three days we remained in this spot. On the fourth the women struck the tents, and packed them upon the camels for a move. The old woman and younger children were lashed upon the furniture, the wives led the camels by a string, and the elder children drove the flocks. We descended the cliffs by a steep and rugged path, and encamped in the valley, on the brink of the dry water-course, in which the fatal ambush had been laid; but higher up. Here the valley was narrower. The approach of spring had called forth a scanty and miserable sprinkling of grass upon the sides of the acclivities.

The daughter of Cherkush Bae, already mentioned, took the camels daily beneath the brow of the cliffs, and there loaded them with snow, which being piled in a heap in the iron cauldrons, afforded water, as it melted, for all culinary purposes. Notwithstanding that melted snow is almost the only water drunk by Kuzzauks (the springs being chiefly supplied from this source), I have never yet known an instance of goitre amongst them; whereas, that disorder is extremely common in the northern part of the Bareilly district, in Hindoostan, where snow has never been seen, and the rivers take their rise in the plain. A

small rocky hill separated our tents from some others; and we learned that Ahris Mhatoor had come hither, to be within reach of support from his own tribe. Here we continued about six days, Ahris Mhatoor daily saddling one of my horses and riding forth, apparently to consult upon his next movement.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Embarrassment of Ahris Mhatoor — Considerations — Fidelity of Cherkush—The Bond—The Negotiator—The Ship-pish—Sensation he produces in London—Whether he acknowledges the Emperor of all the Russias—Liking of a Kuzzauk for Nizaum—Messenger from Hussun Mhatoor—News from Dahsh Gullah — Valuation of plundered Property — The Golden Banquet—Shift Camp—Golden Colic.

THE position of Ahris Mhatoor was embarrassing. He had been the principal leader in the attack upon me, for which his courage and great strength well qualified him. He now perceived that the story of the Toorcumun, by which he had been led to attack me, was utterly false, and that I was in fact the ambassador of his king. But, his brother had saved my life, and he had recovered the Khaun Huzurut's property. He might therefore hope for pardon, through my mediation, if he could only transport me to Khiva. Between that city, however, and his own tent, there lay a waste of nearly 500 miles, producing neither grain for cattle, nor food for man ; and our horses having been turned loose, without food, amongst the mares, were become mere anatomies, scarcely able to support the weight of their own bones. In this waste, almost to the very walls of Khiva, the influence of my old guide, Hussun

Mhatoor, chief of 60,000 Chowdhoor Toorcumuns, was supreme; and, as my arrival at Khiva would be the death-warrant of this chief, it was not to be supposed that he would ever suffer me to reach Khiva, or forgive any attempt to carry me thither. Ahris might, indeed, collect Kuzzauks of his own tribe, sufficient to guard me from other Kuzzauks; and his own name was a safeguard, owing to general dread of his prowess. But, no number of Kuzzauks would venture to oppose a band of Toorcumuns of this powerful tribe, by whom they have been robbed and oppressed, time out of mind.

Again, should Ahris await the arrival of Hussun Mhatoor, it was clear that his own ruin, as my preserver, must ensue; unless he could personally conciliate that formidable chief; who could, at any time, make the violence which the Khaun Huzurut's ambassador had received, an excuse for plundering and murdering the Kuzzauks engaged in it; ingratiating himself with the Khaun Huzurut, by their ill-treatment.

To Dahsh Gullah he dared not carry us, because I could from thence afford him no protection, from either king or chief; and it was certain, that without my protection, one or both, would fall upon the Kuzzauks, the instant I should be free. There was but one solution of the Gordian knot, viz. to cut it, *i.e.* my throat, and to sell my servants. The matter might then be hushed up. The Khaun Huzurut would hear that I had proceeded to the Russian frontier. The Toorcumuns would perhaps be appeased by the plunder, and would scarcely venture upon any outrage upon the Kuzzauks, lest it should lead to discovery of facts, by way of retaliation. Even

this solution of the difficulty could not be attempted, without some understanding with Hussun Mhatoor ; and it seemed to me, that my life was prolonged, only that his concurrence in my death might be previously obtained.

One night, when Ahris Mhatoor, after a long absence (avowedly to visit the Yuze Baushee Mooraud Ali), returned to his brother's tent ; Ali Muhummud overheard the conversation which ensued, between the brothers. Ahris said, he had further consulted the Auk Sukkul (white beards) of the tribe. That they adhered to their former verdict of death, as the sole means of their own security. That, as to their suffering the two brothers to set us free, they saw in that, safety for the brothers, but none for themselves. They would not, therefore, hear of it. Ahris Mhatoor confessed that he saw no way but to yield to the general voice, and to murder me ; and he urged his brother to concur with him in the design.

Cherkush Bae replied, " Never ! I saved his life, the night of the assault ; from that moment, I regarded him as my son. Heaven has taken my only son from me, and given me this in exchange. I swore to him, when the moisture was in the eye of each, never to forsake him, and I will be true to my word."

Ahris Mhatoor, who had repeatedly sworn to the same effect, was ashamed of himself, and without reply. With him were the presents entrusted to my charge by the Khaun Huzurut. He often drew them out, and examined them. It seemed to me at times, to use an Eastern expression, that his eyes grew red upon them. He often asked whether the jewels

were genuine or counterfeit, and demanded the price. The price, I could not say : but as they were presents from monarch to monarch, it must be considerable.

Daily, we urged upon Ahris the subject of our liberation, daily with less hope on our part, and stronger protestations on his. A letter, making him master of all recoverable property on my arrival at Khiva, and ensuring him protection against the Yuze Baushee Mooraud Ali, was insisted upon and granted. I made Ali Muhummud translate it into Toorkish, and put my seal to it. He declined receiving it, however, until his arrangements were complete. That night, he was unusually eloquent, swearing solemn oaths of fidelity, and stretching across the tent, to seize my hand, in attestation of mutual good faith ; and repeating the ceremony with each of my servants, especially Summud Khaun, who was always forward in these debates.

He had scarcely ceased, when there entered the tent, a chieftain of the Kuzzauks, attended by two servants. After embracing the men and women of the family, he seated himself opposite me, and entered upon business. He was a short, square, bustling figure, with florid complexion, a small restless well-opened eye, and a nose disdainfully elevated. A man of talent in his own line, and evidently one, who placed himself forward in all discussions. He spoke in a tone of decision, as if his word were law, using no ceremony, but addressing me as a prisoner, wholly in his power. "We'll send you to Dahsh Gullah," he said.

"Indeed! My arrangements are made with these brothers to return to Khiva."

"But you shan't go: we'll exchange you with the Russians, for our captives at Dahsh Gullah."

"I am the Khaun Huzurut's ambassador, and claim to be taken before him."

"Ah! we care nothing for Ullah Kooli (meaning the Khaun Huzurut). We know nothing of ambassadors."

"The Russians are not my countrymen; they will not thank you for releasing me. They will give you nothing in exchange."

"Yet you have offered your interest at Dahsh Gullah for the release of Cherkush Bae's son."

"Because, if I reach that country as an ambassador, and a guest, I shall have claims upon them. At present, I am not their guest; and if sent to them as a captive, shall be neither guest nor ambassador."

"Never mind! we'll try the experiment, at any rate. We'll keep your people here, and send you for trial."

"Not with my consent; I am the guest of Cherkush Bae and Ahris Mhatoor, and claim their protection."

The fact is, that I had no confidence in this man's sincerity; otherwise, the expedient might have offered a better hope of escape, than the attempt to return to Khiva. But the separation from my people was always a sufficient objection to any project, and I made it such to many. I was their sole earthly safeguard. Could I be got out of the way, they would immediately be sold as slaves.

The new-comer slept in a neighbouring tent, refusing Ahris Mhatoor's invitation, because the latter had rejected his formal application, for my delivery

into his hands. It appeared, that he had two connections, prisoners at Dahsh Gullah.

I lay down, that night, with increased doubt, how long the firmness of our protectors might withstand the threats and cajolery of this hard-hearted and self-sufficient negotiator. I reflected, however, that every act of my preservation, in extremity, had been contrary to all reasonable hope. It seemed, that I had got entangled in one of those strong currents of destiny, in which the struggles of the swimmer produce only disappointment ; whilst the waves, that oft-times seem most dangerous, may become the instruments of deliverance.

The next day, the Kuzzauk chief, assisted by some others, renewed the attack from morning until night, and at length left the camp, on terms of defiance with our protectors.

The day following, I was sitting as usual in Cherkush Bae's tent, wrapped in my cloak, whilst Nizaum endeavoured to free my only silk shirt from the Shippish who daily entered upon possession, and the finest of which, all the Kuzzauk women declared, were a colony from the old Meerza. Nizaum observing my body to be but one mass of bites, lamented that I had had no previous training.

"Training," I replied ; "I never had seen a Shippish before ; I knew not his shape nor physiognomy. He had appeared to me, indeed, in my dreams, a thing of mystery, an element of the sublime, but that was all. I had the utmost respect for him."

"Doesn't he grow in London, Sir ?"

"Grow ! if it were known or suspected, that he had entered the city, the drums would beat to arms, and the guards turn out, and the Lord Mayor and

Aldermen (Reish Sofaid) would muster to the attack, and they would hunt him with fire and sword, until he were exterminated. The English are a clean race."

"Does he grow in Russia, Sir?"

I really could not tell; and now, having been their guest, *will* not tell. Russia must answer for herself, whether amongst the diversity of peoples who call her emperor "Father," there be or be not such a race as the Shippish.

"Ah! Nizaum," I said, "if you could but see an English bed, white as the snow, softer than the summer breeze, you would know what a change it is from that to the filthy felt of a Kuzzauk tent. My poor mother, could she dream that the bed I occupy were even damp, would never close her eyes. Heaven be praised, that she knows not, and cannot guess, of my present condition." Little did I dream at the time, that it was reserved for me to taste again the luxury of an English bed, smoothed by the hand of a mother.

The subject took Nizaum in flank, for he had, the evening before, found a wooden goblet which his mother had brought him, as he quitted her at Candahar; and it had been in his hand and pressed to his lips the whole night, and prevented him from closing his eyes. She was the sole being, for whom he seemed to have any strong affection; for he is dissocial, and no favourite of his fellow-servants.

Whilst thus engaged, there entered the tent two Kuzzauks, who sat down in front of me. The one a young man, with large dark eyes and fine features, but an air of recklessness and insolence. He was evidently urging his companion to some act, of which

the other was either ashamed or afraid. At length, he himself laid his hand upon my furred cloak. I shook him off, and drew myself up, to shew that I resented his insolence; and when he again took a similar liberty, I sent for Cherkush Bae, and claimed his protection. He rebuked the fellow sharply, but did not expel him; and both visitors continued to haunt the tent. At length, when Cherkush Bae was absent, the dark-eyed gentleman said, "Would you like to go to Mooraud Ali?"

I replied that Mooraud Ali, being greatly inferior to me in rank, might more properly wait upon me.

"But he won't come. You had better go to his tent. Will you go?"

This was said, with a wink at his companion. I, of course, declined the journey, understanding the proposition as an attempt to decoy me from the protection of the brothers. The spokesman left the tent in the course of the day, but his companion continued lying at full length, on his belly, with his head raised, and his eyes fixed upon Nizaum. He was the man, to whom Nizaum had been allotted, and from whom I had redeemed that unlucky worthy. Poor Nizaum was as comfortable, under his glance, as a chicken under that of a serpent. He looked, first at the Kuzzauk, then at me, and then heaved profound sighs. I really feared, that the gaze of the Kuzzauk, which lasted the remainder of that, and the whole of the ensuing day, would produce some mischievous effect upon him.

He had, however, in his captivity, acquired a habit which relieved the monotony of existence. This was the manufacture and consumption of snuff. He begged tobacco leaves from the women, and pounded


them up with ashes in a wooden bowl, with the handle of a spade. He and Cherkush Bae's wife became inseparable gossips, from a similarity of tastes. Being a soft-hearted fellow, he had parted with all his rings of turquois set in silver that had escaped the spoilers. He never could resist a female tongue. He was a queer compound of selfishness, obstinacy, and fidelity. I believe, that he was the most sincerely attached to me of all my people; and yet he was the only one that ever thought of quitting me.

It was about this time, that a Toorcumun arrived at the tents, nominally from Hussun Mhatoor's son, and certainly from the father. He stated, that he was sent by the former to express his deep regret and sympathy, and to beg me, for the sake of despatch, to come with him to a camp on the road to Mung Kishlauk, whither both father and son were hastening; and where the chiefs of the Kuzzauks were already assembled, to consult upon means for the recovery of my property. I saw through the snare, and replied, "Tell Hussun Mhatoor, that I deem it an unlucky day, that separated me from his company. Up to the day of this separation, I had been perfectly secure; the instant it took place, I was beset and plundered. Had he continued my guide, this had not happened. He still has the power to rescue me, and if he will now be true to me, I will be true to him. At present, I am protected by Cherkush and Ahris, and cannot prudently quit their shelter. If Hussun would wish to make a bargain with me, let him send his son, Khojeh Muhummud, who bears so high a character, that I can implicitly trust him!"

I knew that a suspicion of my acquaintance with the treachery of Hussun would have been the death-

warrant of myself, and ruin of my people, whom I had cautioned to avoid all hints that could lead to such an impression. The Toorcumun departed, and three Kuzzauk chiefs called. These pretended not to have heard my story, and inquired who and what I was. Upon hearing the tale, they expressed the deepest sympathy, and recommended me in the strongest terms to accept Hussun Mhatoor's proposition, promising to secure my safety with their own lives. The scoundrel who made these protestations had too much of the devil in his face to deceive me. I returned him a thousand thanks, but declared that I would adhere to my league with Cherkush Bae and his brother. Cherkush Bae kissed my hand, and when the Kuzzauks had left the tent, recommended me to beware of all such offers, for that, if once separated from him and his brother, their power to protect me would be forfeited.

Some days previous to the visit aforesaid, and after agreement with Ahris to make him master of all the plundered property upon condition that he conducted me in safety to Khiva, I had explained to him the value of my Cashmere shawl, worth perhaps thirty guineas or more at the Russian frontier; and had recommended him to purchase it from the present owner, and exchange it at Dahsh Gullah for Cherkush's son. He listened with long ears to the advice, sought out the present possessor, and persuaded him to part with it for about seven shillings. Fortunately it had not yet become a pair of breeches, a fate to which it had been destined. Ahris was, however, still afraid to dispose of the shawl, lest Hussun Mhatoor, on his arrival, should demand it of him.



My beautiful Damascus blade, which I had purchased for thirty-five guineas, and which was worth perhaps a hundred, was sold by another Kuzzauk for eighteen shillings. I had taken the precaution at Khiva to conceal its fine water with a coating of tar, lest it should become an object of plunder to my guide, or the people through whom my journey lay. Being obliged, the night of the attack, to carry the sabre entrusted me by the Khaun Huzurut, Nizaum had worn this sword. After shredding the Kuzzauk clubs like straws, it had been beaten down by the oblique blow of Ahris Mhatoor's hatchet.

Here, I was one day inquiring of Nizaum how he had disposed of the gold I had given him. "O!" he replied, "I have eaten it."

I supposed, of course, he was speaking figuratively; for it is a common phrase, "I eat so much a month," that is, such is my expenditure: but I could not imagine how he could have spent even one gold piece in a Kuzzauk tent. I found, however, that he was expressing himself literally. That the night after the distribution, he and the other servants had deliberately swallowed all their gold ducats. Summud Khaun twenty-six, and Nizaum fifteen. Now these ducats were quite as sharp-edged as the knife with which my finger had been amputated; and the milk diet, upon which we had been suddenly placed, seemed to render their extrication quite hopeless. Summud Khaun, not content with bolting twenty-six ducats, had commenced upon the tillahs, which are nearly twice as large, and have a rough saw edge. Most fortunately, the very first he tried stuck fast in his throat, like a Russian proper name, and the noise he made in coughing it up, nearly led to the discovery

of his diet ; the consequence of which would have been the instant opening of his bread-basket by insertion of a Kuzzauk knife. He was, therefore, deterred from any further attempts upon the tillahs ; indeed, he might just as safely have bolted a gross of circular saws.

I was horrified when I discovered the truth ; for it seemed scarcely possible that any of them should recover. I searched for some pills which had escaped the plunderers, and administered them forthwith, but they had not the slightest effect upon persons confined exclusively to a milk diet. I would have given something to have seen my people gravely and deliberately bolting ducats, like cranes drinking at a plate. The best of it was, that Yakoob, the Meer-a-Khor, not relishing the operation, had got Hajji to swallow *his* for him ; an arrangement which led subsequently to a curious dispute, quite worthy of the Court of Chancery.

After about six days spent in this spot, I saw preparations for departure. I was mounted upon Summud Khaun's horse. Ali Muhummud rode his own. We started, but the poor beast could scarcely carry me ten paces ; so that I was obliged to exchange him for Ali Muhummud's horse, which was in a condition almost as miserable.

We rode down the valley, and then struck up a narrow ravine, in which the tents, when pitched, were quite concealed. Nizaum arrived here, about half an hour after me. I found that he was suffering torture from the state of his bowels, and became seriously alarmed for him. Summud Khaun was also suffering from his twenty-six ducats, but not in the same degree. I enquired of the Kuzzauks, whether

they knew of no cathartic; but they had never heard of such a thing. I then endeavoured to procure some oil or fat. But the former is unknown, and the latter so precious, that I had the utmost difficulty in obtaining even the smallest quantity. Poor Nizaum continued writhing and groaning all day, upon the floor of the tent. I could not relieve him, but I sat down beside him to offer him all I could, the assurance of my deepest sympathy.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Hopelessness of our Predicament—Ali Muhummud's Project—
The Afghaun Horsemen—Congratulations of a Bear—Appa-
rition of Saleh Muhummud—Greetings—Recapitulation—
The Search—Confabulations—Happy Disposition and bright
Mind of Saleh Muhummud—Consultations—Joy of my Party
—Confusion of Enemies—Ummeer Beeg—Delicacies un-
known to Heliogabalus—The Tit-bit.

EVERY attempt I had made to bring Ahris Mha-
toor to some speedy decision, had been answered
by a profusion of promises. He would, next day, go
to liberate the three servants from their bondage; the
day after, the camels should be ready, and we would
start for Khiva. One day, in pledge of the solemn
covenant between us, he had led a sheep, first to me,
then to each of my servants, then around the interior,
and afterwards the exterior of his own tent, and then,
with much ceremony, had slain it, and poured out
the blood at his door. But latterly, he had evidently
cooled in his purpose; and it was easy to account for
this, by the influence Hussun Mhatoor would exer-
cise over my fate, the instant he should hear that I
still lived. He had, several days, been fully adver-
tised of all; and, I confess, my hope was utterly
abandoned, when I found time given by our protec-
tors, to admit of this. Had we started when Hussun
was ignorant of my existence, we might have got
beyond pursuit; and, as we approached Khiva, he

would not have ventured to attack me. I was satisfied that all must now depend upon Hussun, whose power, here, was without rival, unless, indeed (as Ali Muhummud supposed), Mooraud Ali, in virtue of his relationship to the royal clan, might have the power and the will to interfere. Ali Muhummud, one day, came to sound me respecting himself. "If," he said, "you, Sir, were out of difficulty, I should mount my horse and escape to Khiva."

I replied, that as for myself, it signified very little what became of me, and, were I alone, I should insist upon his (Ali) doing as he hinted. As it was, I should give him no commands; only, I thought, that if he left us without anyone to interpret our meaning, all our people would inevitably be made slaves, whilst his own escape upon a horse, in such miserable plight, would be extremely uncertain. I thought his idea of escaping to Mooraud Ali's tent less extravagant; at the same time we were utterly ignorant of this chief's disposition. Had it been friendly, he had most probably interfered long ago, as our condition must long have been known to him; and as Ali was utterly ignorant of the position of his tent, and of the landmarks of the intervening desert, I knew not how he was to reach the tent, and feared that his death would be the consequence of failure. He said that, for himself, he had rather run the risk of death than that of slavery, of which he had had sixteen years' experience; but, that it would be a base thing to desert me. He accordingly gave up the design. Remembering how greatly my disaster was attributable to this man's unaccountable blindness to the conduct of the guides, that he had run away and nearly escaped on the night of the assault, and was now treated with more con-

sideration than any other of my people, I was sometimes inclined to suspect him of treachery. But a calm and deliberate comparison of facts past, and of those which ensued, entirely annihilated this idea. Even now my case was so desperate, and his own so involved in it, that only fidelity could have induced him to stand by me when he had means of escape ; for I had supplied him with gold, and he had a horse, sword, and spear.

Ahris continued his protestations, that we should immediately start. But the failure of these no longer disappointed me. I perceived that with all his boasted influence, he really dared not stir a hand or a foot in our deliverance, and every day rendered our case more desperate, by bringing around us more of the meshes of Hussun Mhatoor's treachery.

In this helpless state we were now left, with nothing to hope and abundant cause for apprehension.

Even should the Khaun Huzurut learn, in time, of the outrage committed upon me, I could not certainly foresee the consequence. The suspicions under which I quitted Khiva, might have been confirmed by fresh artifices of Yar Muhummud Khaun ; or, he might feel gratified that I had fallen into trouble, in pursuing a route which he dissuaded me from attempting ; although the treachery of a guide might equally have been met with, whatever the direction of my route ; or, the Russians might (as I greatly feared), have advanced upon his capital, and left him no room for thought of me and my mission.

It was the second or third day of our abode in this spot, the sixteenth or seventeenth of our captivity. A huge bear of a Kuzzauk chief, in a cloak of a bay horse's skin, and bonnet of black sheep-skin, had

just left the tent, after fruitless efforts, of some hours' duration, to make the brothers give me up, and to persuade me to quit the brothers. I was sitting beside poor Nizaum, who still rolled in agony on the ground, affording him such miserable consolation as an assurance of sympathy might amount to. Summud Khaun and the old Meerza sat in the shadow of Cherkush Bae's tent outside. Ali Muhummud was good-naturedly swallowing all Summud Khaun's superfluous *kosteh-zuns*,* and making ready his Kulliaun. The old Meerza was wondering what *could* be the matter with his broken head, that it should feel so heavy, and holding up his hand to the light, as had been his wont every hour of every day since the attack, and calling upon each in turn for his opinion whether it was not swollen, and then wondering what could have happened to him, and what could have become of the two back teeth, one on each side of the mouth, which he had boasted when he left Khiva, and which had been fairly shaken down his throat by the blows he had received on his head. Summud Khaun was turning over the leaves of the Koraun, and in the midst of the sacred Arabic inserting a "*kosteh-zun*" parenthesis, of *pure* Persian, for the benefit of Ali. Suddenly there appeared, upon the heights overhanging the tents, a young man in Afghaun costume, handsomely dressed, and well mounted upon a dark grey horse with silver bridle. He was approaching the tents, followed by some Kuzzauk horsemen. Such an apparition, at such a moment, in such a desert, was rather startling ; for the gracefulness of the Afghaun attire is in strange contrast with the rude, and

* Literally, "Your wife's no better than she should be."

scarcely human costume of the Kuzzauk; and the young man who wore them, was as different, in elegance of feature and figure, from the coarse, clumsy race around us, as a blood racer from the cattle of a country farm.

“Ah,” grumbled Summud Khaun, “here comes Yar Muhummud, dressed out in our finery. He’s got the Meerza’s turban, and one of our cloaks, and the Sahib’s shawl, but whose horse is he riding?”

“Our spoils,” observed Ali Muhummud, “have rigged out some thirty of these cannibals.”

They altered their note when the stranger approached them more nearly.

I was inside the tent, as I have already noticed. I heard a bustle at the door, and in rushed the old bear of a Kuzzauk who had just quitted us. He seized me by the left hand, which was scarcely cicatrized, and almost wrung it off, with the grasp of a steam vice, wishing me joy of, I knew not what, unless it were, that *one* of my fingers survived the mangling. He then rapidly enumerated the benefits he had conferred upon me. These formed a respectable catalogue, but may, for brevity’s sake, be summed up in the single item of an endeavour to deliver me over to my enemies. “From all this it appears,” concluded he, “that I am your active and zealous friend, and I expect you to be mine, with the Khaun Huzurut.”

I bowed, and assured him that anyone who should do me service, should not be forgotten; but observed, that I must, in the first place, be re-conducted to Khiva.

“Oh!” he replied, “the Khaun Huzurut has sent a messenger, and a party of horse, to deliver you.”

I thought, at first, I had heard amiss, and I made him repeat his words ; Nizaum interpreting for me, between the paroxysms of his pain.

"The Khaun Huzurut," I observed, "cannot yet be aware of my captivity."

"Oh! yes he is!"

He was interrupted by a young man in Afghaun attire, who, throwing aside the curtain of the door, rushed past him, and, casting himself upon my neck, exclaimed in Persian, with many tears, "Thank heaven, I have found you at last! I have come to deliver you. I have a letter from the Khaun Huzurut for you. Lift up your head, Sir. Your sufferings are at an end."

I returned his embrace, and gave him tear for tear. But my head was giddy ; I could not believe my senses. I was persuaded I was in a trance.

"Whence are you?" I said. "Who are you? How came you here?"

I pushed him back, that I might regard him more attentively. The features were familiar, but I was too confused to remember where I had before seen them.

"Don't you know me?" he cried ; "don't you remember Saleh Muhummud, to whom you shewed kindness at Merv?"

I remembered him well, and again embraced him. Yet I could not conjecture how he came hither. Poor Nizaum leaped up from the earth, forgetting awhile his torture, to throw his arms around Saleh's neck. Summud Khaun and Ali Muhummud succeeded ; and the old Meerza, after a brief salutation, shewed Saleh his broken head and swollen hand, and asked if he could tell him what had happened, or what *could*

have become of the last of his teeth? I looked around and saw Ahris and Cherkush sitting disconsolate. The arrival of Saleh had thunderstruck both. I bade them draw near, and told Saleh to embrace them, as our preservers. We then went outside the tent, to converse at greater liberty, whilst the brothers slew a sheep, in honour of the new guest. All was still a profound mystery. Saleh seemed to have dropped from the clouds. We had a thousand questions to ask and answer ; a thousand explanations to receive.

On reference to the early part of this Journal, it will be seen, that I met, at Merv, this young man, son of the principal Cauzie (or Judge) of Heraut. That I was struck with his intelligence, frankness, and gentlemanly manners ; and wrote Major Todd, the British envoy at Heraut, that I should like to have him near me at Khiva ; as I foresaw that I should need such an assistant, to give me hints as to the exact measure of attention due to each individual : to intrigue for me abroad, and perfect my Persian, by conversation at home ; offices for which my old Meerza was quite unfit. I thought also, that as bills could not be cashed at Khiva, Saleh Muhumud might be the bearer of money for my expenses there. On reaching Khiva, and finding that his father, in a moment of pique and disappointment, had denounced me as a spy ; I had written to Major Todd, begging him, that whomsoever he might send me, it might not be one of that family.

Providentially, this letter did not reach Heraut, until Saleh had reached Merv, in progress to join me, with a sum of money in gold, and a packet of letters. I had left Khiva ere he quitted Heraut ; so that, by the time he reached the former place, I ought, by

calculation, to have been near St. Petersburg. The Khaun Huzurut had promised to send after me any messenger arriving within eight days of my departure. But, as Saleh did not arrive until the twentieth day, the Khaun found excuses for his detention for twenty days more. Meanwhile he contrived, by means of a secret agent, to abstract from Saleh's girdle during the night, the packet of letters he bore for me. Having opened these, and (probably by means of an interpreter from Persia) translated their contents, and having found therein nothing at variance with the good faith professed by our Government, he had at length yielded to Saleh Muhammad's earnest entreaty, and suffered him to depart, giving him an escort of six Toorcumun horse, of the Chowdhoor tribe.

When Saleh found himself at liberty, I had been from Khiva forty days; the period I had calculated for my journey to St. Petersburg: and any other in the world, but Saleh Muhammad, would have relinquished pursuit of me, as hopeless. But he burned to distinguish himself in the eyes of the British, and declared, that should I have embarked, he would follow me to St. Petersburg. He accordingly started in pursuit, urging his escort to their best speed, in spite of their grumbling. At length, when within about 100 miles of my present position, he learned that I had changed my course, and proceeded towards Dahsh Gullah, a piece of intelligence of the most vital consequence to me, because it saved him about 350 miles of route, and brought him to me ere Hussun Mhatoor's plans for my destruction were completed. At the next stage, he heard that I was murdered. This, instead of deterring, only inflamed

his zeal to advance: but his Toorcumuns, who were at once guard and guides, learning that their own chief, Hussun Mhatoor, had instigated the deed, feared to enter the lists against him, by bringing Saleh Muhummud upon my track, and refused to advance upon the plea that the horses were exhausted. It was in vain that he promised, expostulated, threatened, even drew his sword upon them. They feared their chief even more than the Khaun Huzurut, and would not stir. He wandered from tent to tent, ignorant of all but a few words of their language. By means of these, his winning manners, and the promise of reward, he procured a Toorcumun guide, and continued his course. Intelligence, however, could scarcely be procured in a country so thinly peopled, and from Kuzzauks who had their own reasons for misleading. At length, he learned that I was still alive, although wounded and a prisoner. This caused him to redouble his speed; so that his guide could not, or would not, keep up with him; and he was traversing alone a wild desolate steppe, without path, almost without inhabitant, and with no clue to guide him but the ever-shifting position of the sun. For hours, he had thus wandered, without meeting an inhabitant. He then reached the shore of the Caspian, at the southern extremity of the inlet called Kara Soo (or the black water). He looked around him in despair. No symptoms of a habitation were visible. The sea was without a sail. He saw it for the first time in his life. He strained his eye as he searched the horizon around. At length, he distinguished a moving speck upon the distant cliff. He made towards it: it grew as he approached to the size of a small insect, and he knew it, by its figure,

to be a camel. This assured him that some human habitation was near. He urged on his horse, and found the camel to be the property of Cherkush Bae.

"Now," he said, "Sir, all will go well; my arrival will put all right; I have a letter for you from the Khaun Huzurut. The very sight of it will confound your enemies; I have a guard, too, not far off, of six Toorcumun horse. Those who have most injured, will now be most zealous to serve you."

I did not feel so confident of my security; for my escape to Khiva would be the death-warrant of Hussun Mhatoor and his whole family, as he well knew; and the six Toorcumun horse were of Hussun's tribe, and (as they had proved themselves) mere creatures of that arch villain. The Kuzzauks, too, were deeply concerned in preventing my return to Khiva; and there were a thousand ways of effecting this, without any overt act of violence. I could not, however, discourage one who was so happy in his enthusiasm; and, insensibly, I found his fearless and sanguine spirit inspiring me with a hope which reason disallowed. I proceeded to question him of my friend Major Todd, and of the affairs of Heraut. "Todd Sahib," he replied, "is well, and thinks only of you. I have letters from him for you. If you will come apart, I will tell you more."

We went some paces down the glen, and sat upon a rock. There, touching his girdle significantly, he said, "I have a belt full of gold for you here, and the shroffs at Khiva are prepared to cash your bills for as much more; shall I give you the money now?"

"No," I replied; "I am stripped every day to the skin, and the belt would certainly be seen; you must

continue to wear it for awhile. How are matters at Khiva? What news of the Russian force?"

"All is well at Khiva."

"And what of the Russians?"

"They are still detained by the snow, and by want of camels."

"Heaven be praised. Yet you have been sixteen days on the road, and they may, by this time, be close upon Khiva. Indeed, what is to hinder them? The snow is quite dissipated, and the steppe open."

He strove to soothe me. He assured me the Russians would not, should not advance. That I should return in triumph to Khiva, and there be honoured, and made much of for my services, and sent again, with better provision, to the Court of St. Petersburg. "Heaven be praised," he said, "that I have found you. I thought I never should have got over the ground. But all my care and anxiety are repaid, and all will now go well. The Khaun Huzurut will be delighted to honour one who has done and suffered so much for him."

He rattled on incessantly. There seemed cruelty in the very thought of interrupting the bright current of his happy fancy; and there is luxury in listening even to promises, of the delusiveness of which we are aware. This was just the spirit which my own needed in that hour.

It would not, however, answer to lose time in reflection, when the moment for action was at hand. I consulted with Saleh Muhummud. Separated as he was from his guard, any attempt of ours to reach Dahsh Gullah, would be met by an ambush from Hussun Mhatoor, to cut us off at a spot where the blame would fall upon Russia. It was necessary, in

the first place, to recover his guard, which must be done by a retrograde movement toward Khiva. He had brought a camel, laden with barley and rice, to within two marches of our abode; the Toorcumun guard must, he thought, have come up with this camel, as they were to follow, leisurely, his steps. Now, as far as could be learned, the tent of the Yuze Baushee, Mooraud Ali, was not far from the spot where he had left the grain; and, as some protection from the artifices of Hussun Mhatoor was necessary, I deemed it wise to hasten at once to Mooraud Ali's tent, and throw myself under his protection. I sent for the brothers, Ahris and Cherkush, and told them I should depart the following morning for Mooraud Ali's tent, and begged them to procure camels and ponies for the purpose. They made a thousand objections, but I overruled all with Saleh's assistance. The most formidable was the continued detention in bondage of my three servants. But, as Ahris had daily promised me their freedom, and daily disappointed me, I thought it wiser to negotiate that object from Mooraud Ali's tent, than to give Hussun Mhatoor time to counterplot. The move, therefore, was fixed for the following morning.

It is possible only to him who has been rescued from a bondage so hopeless, by a sudden and unexpected interposition of Providence, to conjecture the state of our feelings at this moment. The gloomy mood of mind, that had become habitual, was insensibly broken through; the stagnation of the faculties was no more; an impulse had been given, that vibrated throughout the whole frame of my being; and without anything to hope for in this world, the call to action inspired me with vigour, with confidence in my

own resources, and in the guardianship of Heavenly care. All was so wonderful, so unlooked-for, so impossible, that I felt shame in distrusting the continuance of a sunshine so graciously sent in upon our souls. As for my servants, the tent resounded with "Ool humm'd Ool illah! Shookr! Ool humm'd!"* Poor fellows, they had trusted God in their adversity, and He had not forgotten them.

The appearance of Saleh Muhummud was like the fall of a live thunderbolt amongst my enemies. He was elegantly clad and handsomely mounted, and known to be son of the principal judge at Heraut, and he paid me more respect than I had received from the meanest of my followers, who, to say the truth, had been a little spoiled in this respect by the equalising influence of misfortune. He therefore added consequence to the little dignity I had contrived to maintain, and proved to them that I had assumed less than was my due. He was also armed with a letter from the sovereign to me, an honour rarely conferred, and had a guard from the Khaun Huzurut, who were to be added to my retinue.

I called Saleh constantly to my side, to repeat my questions; and during the remainder of our sojourn together, whenever I felt inclined to the gloomy view of the future, which care, long suffering, and defeated hope naturally induced, I would summon him to while away the clouds of my fancy by his gay light-hearted prattle. "What news have you," I said, "of Ummeer Beeg?"

"I met him, Sir, at Merv, journeying with Birdler Beeg to Heraut. The Khaun Huzurut had opened and read your despatches which he carried."

* "Praise be to God! Thanks to Him, and praise!"

Whilst talking together, answering and asking a thousand questions, Saleh's Toorcumun guide arrived, and brought a bag of barley for Saleh's horse. I regarded it with a covetous eye. "Are you," I said, "really about to give all that delicious food at once to a horse? Let me have a handful, if you love me."

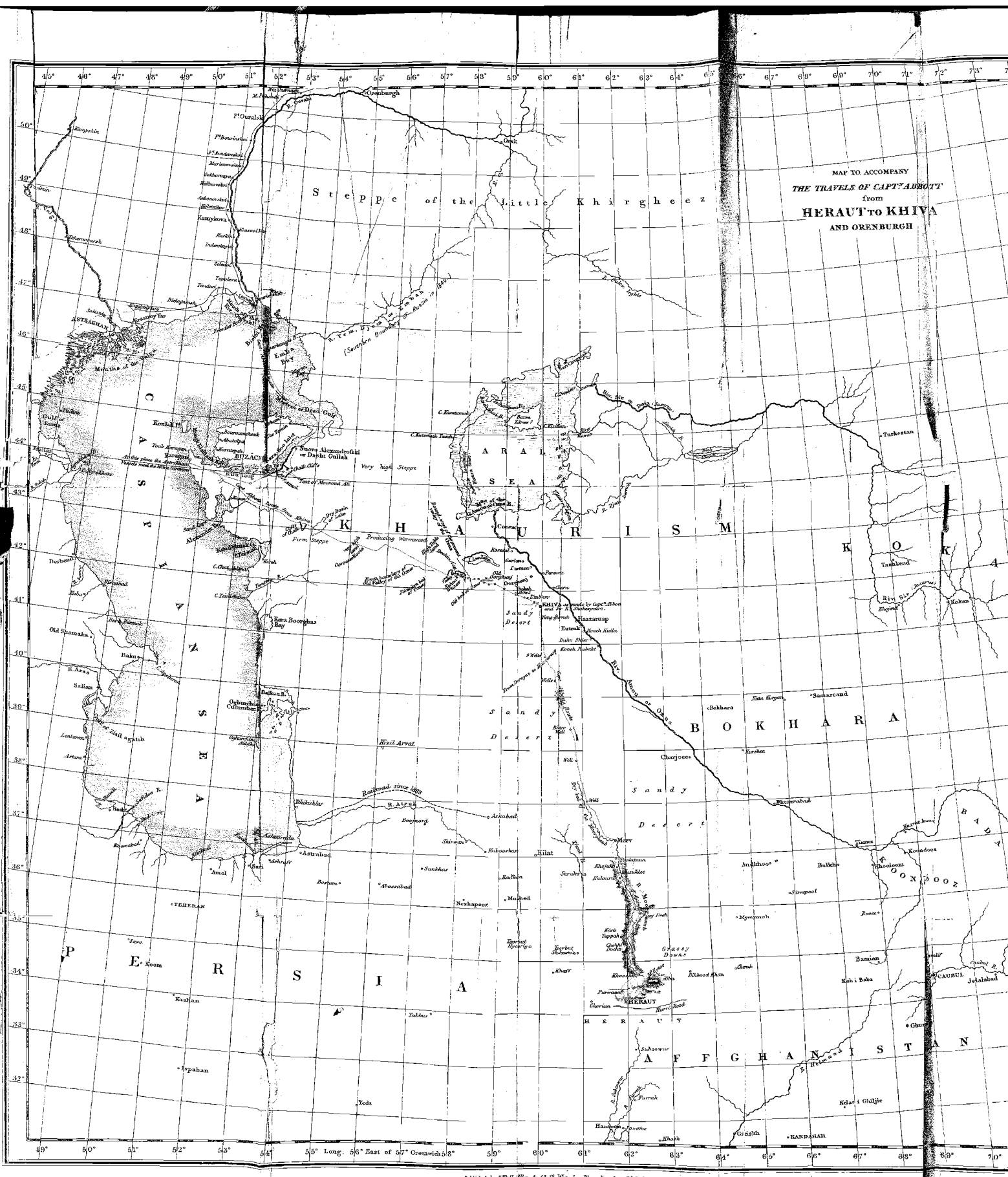
He filled my hand, and I filled my mouth, enjoying the raw barley, as might a lotus-eater his favourite aliment after long banishment from the Nile. It seemed a species of insane extravagance to give such delicious food to a horse. Unfortunately, our poor horses had little enough of this, their sole aliment. Saleh begged me not to eat raw barley; and, running to his saddle-bags, brought me some biscuit, hard, indeed, as flint, but welcome as concreted nectar. I divided it amongst my people, and gave some to the children of Ahris Mhatoor. I was now an epicure in full glory, with my barley and my biscuit.

Our enjoyment, however, was sadly damped by the condition of poor Nizaum, who lay writhing in torture upon the floor of the tent. The arrival of Saleh Mu-hummud had given force to my earnest prayer for a morsel of fat, to administer internally in a melted form. After much tumbling of tent furniture, a lump of yellow horse's fat was produced, which was not much above seven months old, and had probably been put by the old woman under her pillow at night, to be devoured the first thing in the morning. Thence it had made its way by some accident into a sack, from which it was now produced, amid a variety of items, the inventory of which would set aghast the civilized world. We melted the tough and venerable morsel from the blood-red flesh adhering to it, and

poured it hot down the sufferer's throat. The sheep just killed lent us a corner of its tail for a second dose, and in some hours poor Nizaum's sufferings were abated.

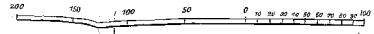
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