THE CRADLE OF MANKIND

"LIFE IN EASTERN KURDISTAN"
(ILLUSTRATED)

BY

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

Sir Walter Scott ("Rob Roy")

PREFACE TO FİRST EDİTİON

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

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

Though the quality of the ingredients must remain of more importance than the proportions, the authors of the present volume hope that at least the latter are correct. One of the writers has spent but three months in the country, the other has lived there for ten years. One was quite ignorant of the East, and

spoke no word of any Oriental language; the other had become so intimate with the tribesmen of his own locality, that they had even begun to tell him of their superstitions—the last secret that they ever disclose.

And the country itself possesses most intense and varied interest. It contains some of the grandest scenery, and some of the most venerable monuments in the world. It is the very *fons et origo* of our Indo-European ancestors. Its traditions connect it with the Garden of Eden, with Noah, and with Abraham. Its folk-lore preserves the old Nature-worship which originated in the brains of the Ape-man. Its history records the very dawn of civilization, and the rise and fall of the earliest of the great empires. The every-day life of its present inhabitants is to this hour the life of the Patriarchs, the life of Europe in the Dark Ages, the life of the Highlands of Scotland in the days of Stewart Kings.

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

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

NOTE TO SECOND EDİTİON

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

While no attempt has been made to tell the full tale of "England in Irak," it has been thought well to take the opportunity given by the appearance of a second edition, and to bring the story of the Assyrian nation up to the date of writing; and the facts which the two concluding chapters record have been collected and verified during a prolonged personal intercourse with the principal actors on the spot.

1922.

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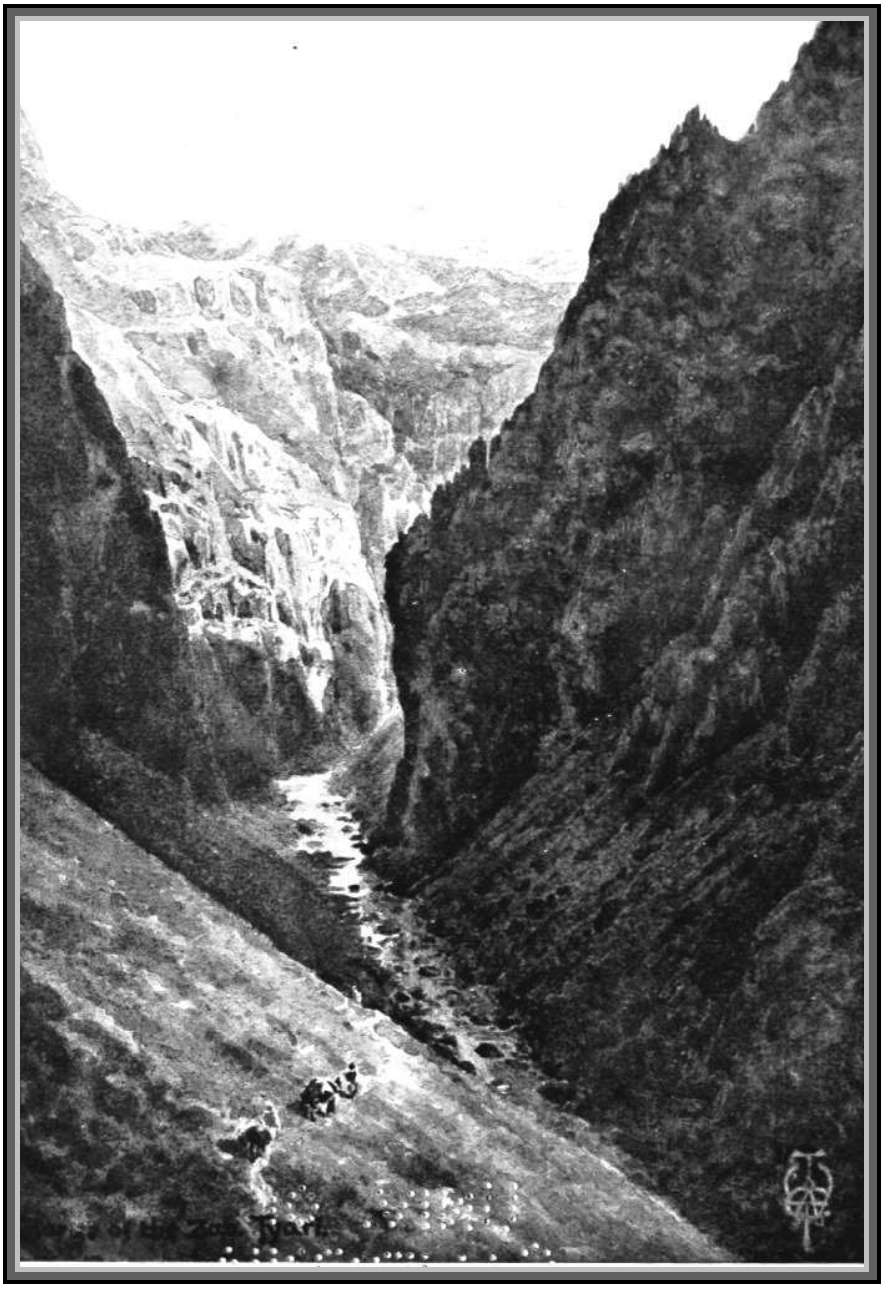
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AUTHOR OF "NORTHERN SPAIN"

ILLUSTRATED FROM SKETCHES AND PHOTOGRAPHS

BY
SIR EDGAR T. A. WIGRAM

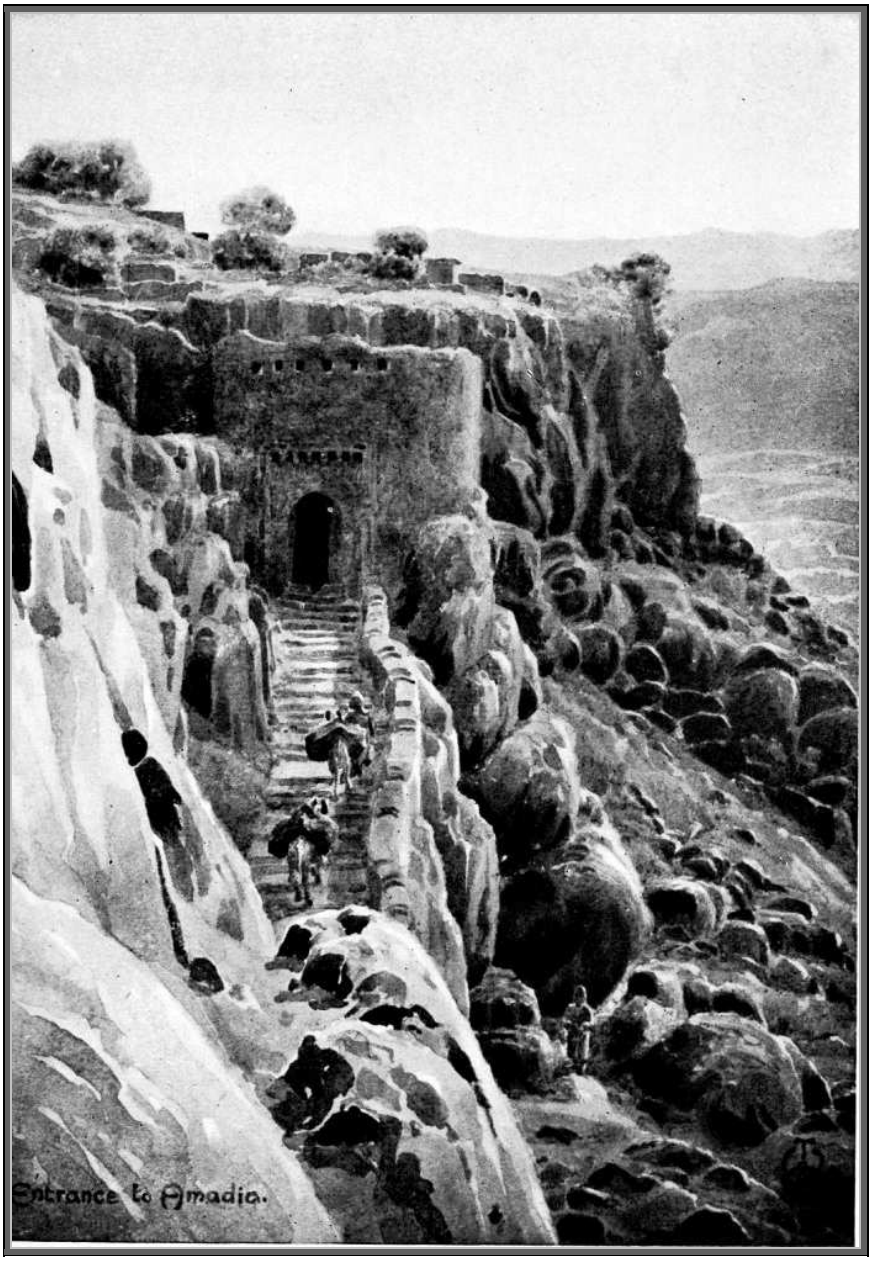


THE RIVER OF EDEN.

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

CHAPTER I

BEYOND THE PALE OF THE RAİLWAY (ALEPPO AND URFA)



ENTRANCE TO AMADIA.

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

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

And now the modern Magrabis, the busy Western magicians, have let slip these formidable Efrits against the City of Al Raschid himself: and one fine morning his descendants will awake from the slumber of centuries to find themselves environed by a new heaven and a new earth.

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

But meanwhile the East waits unconscious. It takes no thought for the morrow. The shadow of coming events is perceived indeed, but not understood. As it was in the days of Noë, so in most things, it still continues:

and the traveller of this generation may still find east of Aleppo those manners and customs unaltered, which the next may find clean swept away. Thus it is possible that some interest may attach to a desultory description of life as it is for the moment still enjoyed, or endured, in those regions; and which better ordered communities may perhaps find rather *bizarre*.

Aleppo, the present railhead, is a large Oriental city, lying pooled in a shallow depression round the great castle which dominates its roofs. It is beginning to show signs of Westernization; and the quarter nearest the railway station is blossoming with boulevards and hotels. But it is the returning, and not the outgoing, traveller who will be most struck by these symptoms. The latter will only be consumed with wonder that such a crude and guileless imitation should be thought to pass muster as the real thing. Outwardly the place is being refurbished, and the new "Frank" houses flaunt themselves as bravely as their compeers around the *Soko* at Tangier; but within they are full of all Oriental uncleanness and discomfort, for the Turk is quite satisfied as soon as he gets veneered.

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

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

taken at the battle of Tiberias. There are some Western features in the building which give colour to this supposition; but the place was a notable stronghold long previous to Saladin's day.

Aleppo was one of the few fortresses that made a respectable defence against the Moslems at the time of their first irruption. None of the great frontier towns to the eastward,—Edessa, Amida and Dara—so much as stood a real siege. Such was the bitterness of party strife, both civil and religious, within the Byzantine Empire at that period, that the Arab invaders were welcomed rather than resisted in these lands.

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

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

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

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

Yet Aleppo itself was near enough to the sea to recover even from this disaster; and within 150 years of Timour's conquest it was once more one of the chief marts of the East. Hither came the London Turkey merchants, among them the "Master of the Tiger." Hither, with the Venetians, came Othello, to

have his memorable encounter with the "heathen Turk." John Verney was trading here in the middle of the seventeenth century, and describes it as "the most famous city in all the Grand Seignior's dominions for the confluence of merchants of all nations." Among the commodities dealt with he enumerates the "oak galls for dyers" which are still a valuable harvest in the Kurdistan mountains; but he makes no mention of the liquorice, which is now the most important of all.

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

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

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

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

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

caused great consternation to our householder, for he had been using it as a threshold.

We halted each night at some village *khan*, the Turkish synonym for the better known Persian word *caravanserai*, which forms the common house of entertainment both for man and beast. A typical *khan* consists of a great square courtyard full of foul dust in dry weather and of fouler mud in wet. Often have we felt inclined to bless the hard frost at night in winter time, which has enabled us next morning to walk to our carriage on the top of the mud instead of wading through. The courtyard is enclosed by a range of miserable hovels—the sort of shanties which might perhaps pass muster as tool sheds in allotment gardens, those "lodges in gardens of cucumbers," which Isaiah considered the nadir of dilapidation. Some of these take rank as stables and others as guest chambers. In point of comfort and cleanliness there is little to choose between them; but occasionally the guest chambers are on an upper story, and then the humans are somewhat better off than the brutes. Let us assume, not to be too sanguine, that our room will be on the ground floor; and, not to be too despondent, that we shall get a room to ourselves.

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

Our fellow guests are mostly Kurds or Arabs, with Syrians and Armenians rather more sparsely intermixed. They may be told apart by their languages, or less certainly by their dress; for the Arabs are the only folk hereabouts who adhere very scrupulously to their own distinctive costume. This consists of a

gown, generally of some striped or plain soft-coloured material, reaching almost to the feet, and girt about the waist with a bright coloured sash. A V-shaped opening from neck to waist shows an embroidered shirt-front under, and over all is worn an *abba* or Arab cloak. The *abba* is generally of woollen fabric, either dark brown, or boldly striped with black and white or brown and white in broad and narrow stripes arranged alternately. For winter wear it is often made of sheepskin, worn woolly side out during wet weather, and woolly side in during dry. On their heads they wear a bright coloured head cloth, either of silk or cotton, which is kept in position by a double coil of soft black rope forming a sort of wreath. They usually wear their hair long.

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

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

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

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

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

The nationalities are as diverse as the languages, and are interwoven together in the most bewildering entanglement; not by separate districts dovetailed into one another like the pieces of a jig-saw puzzle, but by tiny fragmentary communities dispersed like different grains shaken up vigorously in a bag. The village is the largest unit; and where one village is Syrian, the next may be Kurdish, the next Armenian, the next Yezidi; all out of sympathy with each other and all resolutely refusing to mix. Here and there in the medley one may find occasionally a specimen which has no affinity whatever with any neighbouring nationality. Membij, for example, is a village of Circassians, fugitives from the Russian occupation who were given an asylum here by the Sultan Abdul Hamid. We have sometimes wondered whether this extraordinary mixture may not be the fruit of the policy adopted by the ancient Assyrians, who were wont to disperse their captive nations through all the length and breadth of their domain; but the same thing is seen in the European provinces

of Turkey where Assyrians and Persians never penetrated, and where Serbs, Bulgars, Greeks and Roumanians form an equally tangled skein.

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

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

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

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

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

The point where we crossed the river is unmarked by any village, but a considerable town named Birijik lies about thirty miles up stream.

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

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

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

This sounds as if the landlord got the lion's share of the profits. And if he be miserly he does; but most of them interpret their signoral duties in a more liberal spirit. The landlord is expected to keep a guest house in his village, and a man in charge of it. Here anyone, be he villager or traveller, can get a free meal and free lodging. One big man in this district is reputed to expend food to the value of £1000 annually in such hospitality, including corn to the value of £400 in bread alone. Moreover, the landlord acts as a sort of savings bank to

his villagers. If any of them is in distress and applies to him, he will relieve him. He will never think of sparing as long as his barns hold anything. He lives simply, as they do; and he holds that "Allah will provide."

All payments should be considered as being made in kind, not in money; for coin is scarce in Turkey, and not very generally used.[6] Even if it were more plentiful it is but a fluctuating security; for the coins in common use are the silver ones, and these are never current at their face value.[7] The gold £1 Turkish, nominally worth 100 piastres, fetched at the time of our visit from 102 piastres at Mosul to 114 at Aleppo; and the value of Mejidies (nominally 20 piastres), and of 5 piastre-pieces, varied also in different degrees. This is not all the fault of the Government; for while home trade and industry must be sorely hampered by such eccentricities, the Constantinople banks (which are run by European syndicates) are not altogether displeased. They can make a profit on the deal, for they hold most of the bullion: and when any particular coin has much appreciated anywhere, they can unload their stock of it at that particular place.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Oriental cities as a rule are rather a disappointment to sightseers. Picturesque they are indeed, but in such a squalid fashion that much of their charm is blighted. They are a mere agglomeration of hovels, with a few fine features here and there. We have even heard it said of Constantinople itself

that, having seen the approach to the Golden Horn, the traveller had better take his departure; for that every nearer inspection brings a fresh disillusionment in its train. Urfa, however, may rank as one of the exceptions. It is beyond question the most picturesque city in Mesopotamia. And, being built chiefly of stone, it has some dignity in its dilapidation, and wears its tattered finery with an aristocratic air.

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

The promontory to the west of the town is crowned by the ancient citadel; now a mere shell, but imposing from its situation, and surmounted by two lofty Roman columns formerly a portion of a temple portico.[10] Towards the town the hill is precipitous, but on the further side the slope is gradual; and accordingly the whole of this face, together with the two return ends, is defended by one of the most magnificent dry moats that exists anywhere in the world. It is hewn out of solid rock, with sides that are absolutely vertical; and may measure even now about thirty feet deep and not less than thirty feet wide. Formerly it could be crossed at two or three places by narrow wooden drawbridges; and the posterns to which they gave access can still be seen in the walls. At what epoch this moat was constructed we did not feel competent to determine. The walls are partly Saracenic, partly Roman, and partly Sassanian; they are now extremely ruinous and of no very formidable height.[11]

Urfa in classical days was known by the name of Edessa, and was the capital city of that king Abgarus of Osroëne, whose Epistle to our Lord is

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jocelyn died in 1132, leaving his feeble-spirited son to succeed him,[14] and thereafter the fortunes of the Crusaders began very rapidly to wane. Their first invasion had been happily timed; for the last great Seljuk Sultan, Malek Shah, had died two or three years previously, and had left his empire to be disputed among his four sons. Thus for a time there had been no single great ruler to unite the Moslems against the Christians. But now a new power was being built up by Zanghi the Atabek at Mosul; and under him, and his successors Noureddin and Saladin, it grew more formidable every year. Zanghi—Sanguin, as the Crusaders called him—laid siege to Edessa in 1144, and Milicent the queen regent of Jerusalem found herself powerless to send aid. Zanghi breached the walls by undermining one of the towers; the stormers overtook the flying garrison before they could enter the citadel; and an indiscriminate massacre brought the Christian dominion to an end.

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

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

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

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

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

But the real patron saint of Urfa is no other than the Patriarch Abraham; for the Moslems all believe implicitly that Urfa is Ur of the Chaldees.[15] They have here Abraham's cradle, and his tomb (which they never allow Christians to look upon); and they have the Pool of Abraham also, which is the principal sight in all their town.

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

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

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

CHAPTER II

A LAND OF DUST AND ASHES (DİARBEKR AND MARDİN)

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

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

During the second day, however, we became aware of another feature, which, if it adds no beauty, at least lends interest to the scene. A layer of higher ground is thrust across the plateau. It radiates out into long flat tongues; and its steep escarpments are littered all over with the big black boulders that have fallen from the bristly fringe along the upper edge. These boulders are covered with a grey-green lichen, and mottled with patches of moss of a warmer and richer green; but no other kind of vegetation seems able to flourish among them, and the prevailing tone of the landscape is a gloomy bilious grey. To

those who have seen it before such a picture needs no commentary. A vast outpouring of volcanic scoriæ has covered the whole countryside.

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

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

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

Karaja juts out towards the plains like a huge cape, isolated from the mountains; and our road slowly heaves itself upward to find a way over its tail. As a road it is incredibly villainous, for it takes the basalt boulders *au naturel*, and hardly an attempt has been made anywhereto form a surface at all.[17]

Round our left sweep the desolate fields of broken and disintegrating lava. On our right they rise, terrace on terrace, toward the mountain from which they flowed. And as we leave the mountain behind, and continue our way to the eastward, the aspect of the country changes little: it is still lava that surrounds us on every side.

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

The city crowns a bold rocky bluff overhanging the gorge of the Tigris, which flows some 300 feet beneath it in a broad and sandy bed. The river is here wide and deep, and its modern name—*Shat*, the Arrow—testifies the rapidity of its current; but a little below the city its course is checked by a bridge and a weir. In the severe winter of 1910-11 it was frozen over so hard at this point that the caravans of camels were able to cross it on the ice. The river covers the eastern face of the city; and the ground falls fairly steeply along the southern face also. But toward the remaining two faces the approaches are over level ground.

We possess many cities in Europe which are still entirely encircled by Roman or mediæval ramparts. Such are Carcassonne, Aigues Mortes, Avila, Lugo, and Rothenburg; and we may add Constantinople, though in this case the circuit is incomplete. But, having seen all these examples, we feel bound to put it on record that the basalt walls of Diarbekr are distinctly the finest of all. The walls are some forty feet high and about five miles in circuit, and are strengthened at frequent intervals by eighty massive towers. Most of these are semicircular, but some are semioctagonal. They are spaced about three and a half diameters apart, and project boldly from the curtain walls between. The line traced by the walls is irregular, skirting the edges of the hollows; and at

each salient angle is a huge circular bastion. The gateways are somewhat insignificant, being mere holes in the walls flanked by a tower on either side: and this is characteristic of most Roman fortifications, the gateways of Lugo (for instance) being very similar in design.[18]

The curtain walls are from ten to fifteen feet thick; thinner along the river front, where the precipitous basalt cliffs rendered assault almost impracticable; and thicker along the other three sides. These sides are further protected by a moat cut in the solid rock, but neither so deep nor so wide as the giant moat at Urfa. Along the inner edge of this moat, some paces from the base of the ramparts, is a low breastwork of masonry as at Constantinople and Carcassonne. A loopholed and vaulted gallery is carried along the top of the ramparts, and above this were the battlements, so that the defenders had a double banquette.[19] The towers are vaulted internally, and have double banquettes also; and the garrison could reach their stations by a double staircase at every tower. The citadel is at the north east corner overhanging the gorge of the river, and in the midst of it is a huge mass of masonry, once the mount of the demolished keep.

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

The houses in the town for the most part are a set of squalid hovels, intersected in all directions by a maze of narrow crooked streets. Our carriage fairly stuck in one of these alleys as we were attempting to pass through it; and for some minutes it seemed problematical whether we should be able to wriggle free. Yet not all the houses are mean; and in the quarter near the citadel, the residence of the chief officials, a very considerable number are solidly constructed of stone. Some few of these are genuinely old, and possess a good deal of interest. They are often built in two colours, with alternate

horizontal bands of black basalt and yellow marble, resembling not a little the black and white marble buildings of Pistoia. It is curious how this taste for coloured ornamentation seems inherent in the dwellers in volcanic districts, where materials of different colours are always readily available. The same trait is very conspicuous in the volcanic districts of Auvergne. The most notable example at Diarbekr is a big mansion in the main thoroughfare. A house very similar in type to the old palaces of Spain and Italy; bare, square and prison-like outside, and entered by a single great doorway; but with graceful arcaded porticoes surrounding the *patio* within. Once, no doubt, it was indeed a palace, the abode of some prominent magnate: but now it is only a *khan*; and a *khan* so notoriously filthy that even our *Arabaji* shrank from an encounter with its fleas.

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

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

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

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

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

Yet Amida had at least performed the duty which is ordinarily expected of a fortress. It had held back the tide of invasion for the period of a whole campaign. Sapor had lost a third of his army; and the season was too far advanced for any further operations. He retreated again into Persia, and abandoned the city that he had won.

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

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

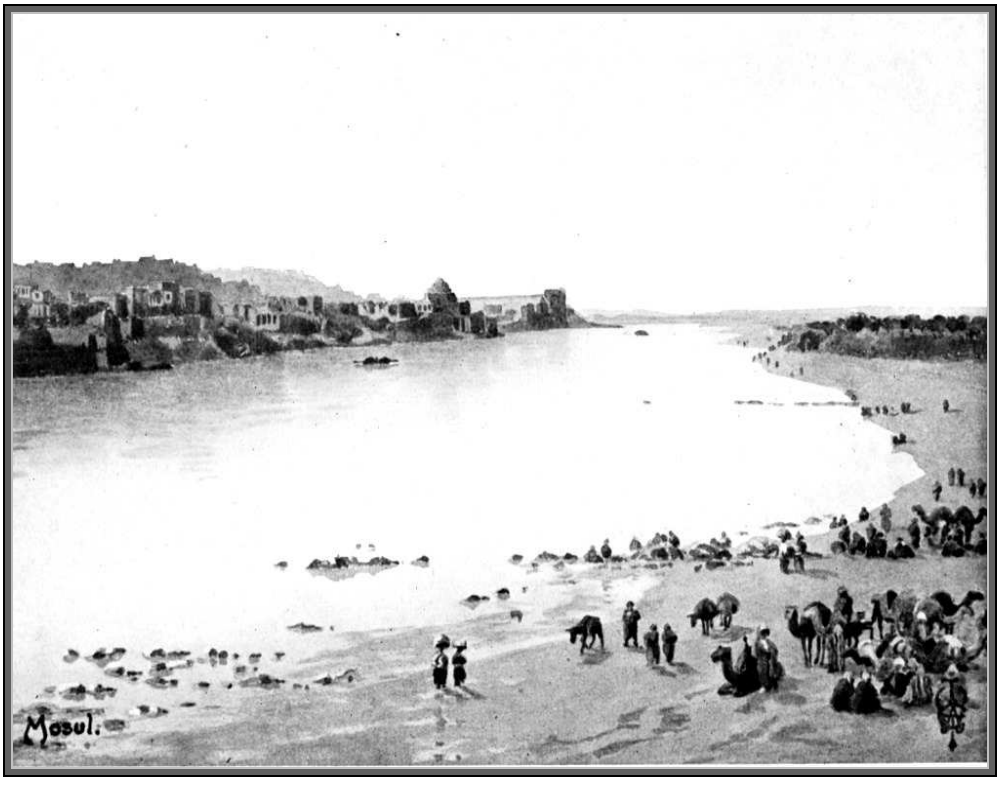
Three months had passed in vain assaults, and Kobad had made no progress. His thinly clad Persians were suffering terribly from the winter cold; and the Great King swallowed his dignity and offered to raise the siege for half a crown! But success had made the defenders more insolent than ever, and they scorned even this show of homage. They retaliated by sending him a bill for the vegetables which his army had consumed out of their gardens. This was too much for Kobad, and he resolved to fight to a finish. Three days later the laugh was on his side.

One night a party of Persians were pursuing a certain Kutrigo who had sallied from a privy postern to make a raid on their camp. As they neared the walls they received no challenge, and not an arrow was shot at them. That

particular tower was manned by the "Sleepless" monks of Anzetene; and it chanced that "a certain man" (in the most friendly spirit) had given them a good supper and wine to drink, so that they were all in deep slumber. The Persians seized their opportunity and made themselves masters of the tower. The garrison were aroused and hurried up to expel them, endeavouring to cut away the vaulted floor under their feet. The Persians planted their scaling ladders and swarmed to the help of their comrades; and for thirty-six hours continuously the fight raged furiously on the wall. Peter of Amkhoro, a man of gigantic stature and clad in complete armour, held the banquette on one side against the utmost efforts of the Persians: but in the opposite direction they pushed on from tower to tower till at last they gained one of the gateways. The army poured in irresistibly, and the massacre began.

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

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



MOSUL.

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

Farzman was an active local Sheikh who had espoused the cause of the Romans, and who had made his name a terror to the Persians by a multitude of daring deeds. He was only in command of 500 horse; and any attempt to form a regular siege of such a first-class fortress would of course have been ridiculous. But an adroitly handled cavalry force can do a good deal in the way of "containing" an Oriental city. In the winter of 1911 Shuja ed Dowleh, the Agha of Maragha, nearly reduced Tabriz, with all its 300,000 inhabitants, with an equally puny band.

Farzman knew full well that the Persians in Amida could not have had time to replenish their magazines. He quietly cut off communication with the surrounding villages, and suppressed the daily market that was held without the walls. Glon very naturally grew restive; and listened greedily to a certain

Gadono, a prominent local sportsman, who told him that he had located Farzman's camp in the course of his hunting excursions, and would enable him to take it by surprise. Accordingly Glon sallied out with all his available cavalry. But the wily Gadono had been in communication with Farzman. The "surprise" had been all arranged beforehand; and Glon and his party were wiped out.

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

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

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

Diarbekr in 1895 was one of the centres of the Armenian massacres, and as many as 2500 perished in this place alone. Little enough was heard about it at the time in England, where attention was almost monopolized by yet more

monstrous holocausts; but what passed then as a mere local incident wears a very different aspect when we visit the actual spot where it was enacted—when we see the doors still splintered and patched in the houses which were stormed by the rioters, the photographs of the luckless victims still treasured in the albums of their surviving friends and relatives, and the ghastly bald patch in the midst of the city where the Armenian quarter was razed to the ground and has never been re-erected to this day.

The massacre was undoubtedly prompted by the Government of Constantinople; but their agents were the fanatical Kurds who swarm in the slums of Diarbekr, and who flocked in eagerly from the surrounding villages to take a hand in the work of slaughter and to share in the plunder which followed. That the massacre was political and not religious was proved by the fact that the Syrian Christians (who are also numerous in Diarbekr) did not suffer to anything like the same extent as their Armenian co-religionists. The crowd of refugees who sought sanctuary in the Jacobite cathedral were not molested, and only isolated individuals fell victims to the fury of the mob. That the outbreak wore a mask of fanaticism was a thing inevitable in the Orient. The perpetrators were the Kurdish riff-raff; and on this point Mohammedan *badmashes* are alike all over the world. Only religious zeal can excite their passions dangerously; and when their passions are dangerously excited they always find expression in religious zeal.[25] But the very fact that a distinction was made between Armenians and Syrians, is alone sufficient to indicate that in this instance the mob was under some sort of control.

The hatred of the Turks for the Armenians is due to the fact that the Armenians are the only one of their subject nations of whom the Turks are afraid. The Arabs and Kurds are their co-religionists, and have no national cohesion. The Nestorian and Jacobite Syrians are either too few to be dangerous, or too thoroughly tamed by long subjection to have any desire to rebel. But the Armenians are numerous and imbued with national aspirations; and though the majority of them are inoffensive cultivators, they include a considerable number of intelligent and capable men. A small percentage too are active political propagandists, who continue to work persistently to overthrow the present régime. Under equal political conditions the Armenians

would soon secure dominance: and this would be a subversal which the Turks could never endure. So when the Armenians grow restive the Turks resolve to "take precautions." They cannot cope with them in cleverness, but in physical force they can.

Will there be further massacres? It is an ever-present danger. The Turks do not wish it—it makes trouble with the European Embassies; and, after all, slaughtering the Armenians is killing the goose that lays the golden eggs. The Kurdish chiefs do not wish it either, for they too stand to lose pecuniarily: but beneath them seethes the fanatical mob, easily roused by hot-headed agitators, a sort of open powder magazine which any stray firebrand may ignite. "I will give you full warning if I can," said a friendly Vali to a gentleman of our acquaintance; "but I can only tell you that I see no danger just now. There is talk of course—there is always talk; and so long as the talk reaches our ears it is not likely to go further. When you see little groups whispering together outside the mosques, and breaking up whenever a Christian passes within earshot—that is the real danger-signal, and you can see that as well as I."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The best one can say of the administration of justice is that it probably is not quite as corrupt as it appears to be. The judge takes bribes from both sides with a view to remaining unbiased; and, if he is scrupulous, restores his bribe to the loser. In criminal cases, however, one must make allowance for a further principle. Among ourselves criminal acts are regarded as an offence against the State, and it is the State's duty to exact the penalty. But the Turks are inclined to regard such acts merely as an offence against the individual. The State does no more than recognize the right of the injured party (or his representative) to