

Journal of a tour from Oroomiah to Mosul through the Koordish Mountains

Rv. Justin Perkins, D. D.
Missionary of the American Board in Persia
April 25, 1849

April 25, 1849—Leaving my home at Seir, at 7 o'clock A.M. I started for Mosul. I rode to the city, and remained there till 1 o'clock, P.M. engaged in completing my preparations for the journey. We rode to Takky, a Nestorian village near Ardishai, and stopped for the night with Priest Shaleeta, who accompanied us from the city. Ardishai and Takky are about fifteen miles South-South-East of the city of Oroomiah. They are large villages, the two containing from twelve to fifteen hundred inhabitants.

April 26—Mar Gabriel accompanied us on our way as far as to the Barandooz river, about two miles from his village. He dashed through the swollen stream, with his characteristic boyishness, the water rising to his horse's back, while we preferred to cross the bridge, which was near at hand. Our road to-day lay near the lake, and its direction was South by East. After proceeding five or six miles, we halted an hour for the muleteers to bait their horses. As we looked back, the immense plain of Oroomiah lay stretched out before us in all its grandeur and loveliness, which, at this verdant season, more than any other, utterly defy description. Reloading our horses, we crossed a gravelly ridge, which runs down to the lake from the western mountains, and thus passed into the small district of Dole, which is the southern extremity of the plain of Oroomiah, corresponding to the district of Anzel, in which Gavalan is situated, at the northern extremity. Dole is a very fertile district, shut in between the Koordish mountains and the lake. We stopped for the night in the lower part of it, at the village of Kergun, which is perched on a bold promontory that stretches a short distance into the lake. The lake is gaining upon the village by gradually undermining it, the soil at the base of the hill on which it stands being sand, which is overlaid by thick rocky strata of conglomerate. We passed along the high cliff thus formed. It hung frightfully over our heads, while the waves dashed angrily below.

Our stage to-day was short, not more than sixteen miles; but our muleteers, being from Kergun, must stop there with their families for the night.

We were invited to take lodgings in an upper room of the highest house in the village, belonging to Kareem Khan of Oroomiah, who is the owner of Kergun, and occupies this house only when he happens to be in the village, usually some part of the summer. The views of the lake from this point are very extensive, and almost enchanting.

At evening a villager with gun in hand brought to us a present of a pigeon, which he had shot, and said to us, as he presented it, "Such, sir, may your enemies be," an incident that naturally reminded us of the terms in which the death of Absalom was reluctantly announced to his anxious father by Cush: "Is the young man Absalom safe?"

And Cush answered, 'The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee, to do thee hurt, be as that young man is.'" Another villager brought us the finest flower that I ever beheld, which he had picked, in its wildness, on the neighboring mountains. It had the appearance of a large bouquet, and it was only by inspection that we could be persuaded that the whole grew upon a single stem. It consisted of some fifteen beautiful tulip-flowers, entirely distinct, which encircled the stem, bending gracefully downward, while a rich tuft of long green leaves rose in the midst, and hung over the tulips, as if to give a modest blushing air to the splendid cluster, by partially veiling their brilliant crimson color.

April 27—Our road to-day lay near the lake, most of the way. We left the district of Dole, by passing over green meadows and fertile wheat fields three or four miles, and then, crossing low rocky ridges, entered the district of Sooldooz. On a former occasion, almost fourteen years ago, I travelled this way by the upper road, from the village of Sheitanava, in Dole, to Negaddeh, the principal town of Sooldooz; but the danger from the Koords on the mountains above was now considered as too great to allow us to go that way; and even on the lower road, near the lake, we were pointed, in a deep ravine, to the graves of several Persians recently murdered there by the Koords, and to a cave in a rocky ridge near by, that is much frequented as a den of robbers. And as we advanced toward Sooldooz, the people on the way expressed great surprise that we had come over the fearful stage unharmed. There is a great deal of disorder in this part of Persia, at the present time, resulting from the negligence and inefficiency of its miserable rulers; and robberies and murders are very frequent.

The day we left Oroomiah, we observed a few very small locusts, by the roadside, and we had seen increasing numbers all the way, as we proceeded. But to-day, some of the declivities along which we passed were literally covered with them. Their early appearance presents a melancholy prospect for the inhabitants, especially the poor, who are now obliged to pay four times the ordinary price for grain, on account of the ravages of the same scourge, the locusts, in this district, the past two years.

After passing down upon the plain of Sooldooz, we proceeded two miles, and came to the river Jedder, which flows down to the lake from the West. It was now overflowing all its banks, owing to the melting snow on the upper ridges of the surrounding mountains, as well as the rain that was falling. The river, which is ordinarily one hundred and fifty feet wide at this place, now spread itself out to a breadth of five or six hundred feet, and was so deep that we were obliged to hire strong men to carry our loads over, on their shoulders. After reaching the southern bank of the Jedder, we rode out of our direct road, two miles, to the village of Rakhtana, which contains six Nestorian families, for the sake of stopping among our own people.

Sooldooz is a very fertile district, more than twenty miles long from East to West, and from ten to fifteen miles broad. It is shut from the lake by a low, broken ridge of hills, and enclosed on its other sides by grassy mountains. Immense quantities of grain are annually exported from Sooldooz. In this time of scarcity, we passed many loads of wheat from this district.

April 28—We proceeded five fursaks, more than twenty miles, to-day, in a South-South-East direction, to the town of Saouj Boolak. Sooldooz is at the south-western corner of the lake, and our stage to-day led us back from it, among the Koordish mountains. We gradually rose, after leaving the plain of Sooldooz, till we reached the top of a high mountain-ridge. From thence our way was down a steep descent, and

then we wound up another ridge, from the top of which we saw the town of Saouj Bolak lying directly below us, in a small, deep valley, encompassed on all sides by mountains.

Near the town we crossed the Saouj Boolak river, by an old high stone bridge of four arches, two of which are broken down, and their places supplied by timbers covered over with sticks and loose stones. This bridge, which is about one hundred and fifty feet long, was originally built of fine hewn limestone. Just on the southern bank of the river are several soda-springs which deposit a species of white limestone, and grave-stones are hewn from a quarry of the same near by. The town probably takes its name, Saouj Boolak, or Cold spring, from a pure spring just below it, said to be remarkable for the coldness of its water.

Several showers fell in the course of our ride to-day, and hail in one instance. But our India-rubber cloaks shielded us from harm, or exposure; and the scenery was delightful among the mountains, now green to their tops, except a few patches of snow, and with large flocks here and there grazing on their declivities. The season is now very pleasant, and favorable for travelling over these regions, though we may expect more or less rain.

The town of Saouj Boolak lies directly on the south-eastern bank of the river, half a mile below the bridge. It is unwallled. Being low, and surrounded by high mountains, it must be very hot in summer. It is a Koordish town, of twelve or fifteen thousand inhabitants. The houses are built of the dark red sandstone and limestone soil of the valley, which the rains soon wash down from the walls. Most of the roofs project a little, and thus partially protect the buildings.

There are four Armenian families in Saouj Boolak, with one of whom we took lodgings for the Sabbath.

Saouj Boolak is a place of a good deal of trade. In the bazaar, we saw merchants from Tabreez, Mosul, and Oroomiah. It is particularly important for its trade in gall-nuts, which are brought to this town from the different parts of Koordistan, and thence transported to Constantinople and Europe, by way of Erzeroom and Trebizond, and to Russia, by way of the Caspian Sea.

There are about a hundred families of Jews in Saouj Boolak, and we had met with some at Muhammed Shah, the last village in Sooldooz. Thus scattered over all these regions is the remnant of Israel.

April 29—In the evening, an Armenian priest from a village eight or ten miles distant, called Daralek, stated to us that there are fifteen Armenian families in his village, and ten Nestorian families, the latter, also, in their deficiency of a priest of their own people, looking to him as their spiritual shepherd. These ten Nestorian families, and one family in the town, are now the only Nestorians in the district of Saouj Boolak, which formerly contained a considerable population of that people.

April 30—Being unable to obtain horses, we were obliged to linger at Saouj Boolak another day. In the afternoon, we visited the soda-springs already mentioned. There are six or eight of these springs, a few rods apart, around each of which has arisen a conical mound of soft white limestone, from the accumulating deposits of the water. Mr. Stocking carried with him some tartaric acid, which we mixed with tumblers of soda-water from the spring, and drank to our own satisfaction, and the great astonishment of the natives who accompanied us, and who before knew nothing of the valuable properties of these springs. A Koord who accompanied us stated that there are marble quarries in a mountain about two or three miles to the south-West of Saouj

Boolak; and there were slabs of marble in a grave-yard near by, said to have been taken from that mountain.

May 1—Considerable rain fell during the last night, but the weather was perfectly clear this morning, for the first time since we left Oroomiah, though the sun had frequently appeared, during this time, at short intervals.

At Saouj Boolak our course changed from South-East to South-West. Hitherto, we have been receding somewhat from Mosul, instead of advancing toward it. Now, we were happy to turn our faces directly toward the place of our destination. This circuitous route is probably the best, and perhaps the only practicable one, at this season. The district of Qoshnoo, through which the more direct route passes, has been in a very disturbed state, ever since the Koords of that place made their irruption upon a part of the plan of Oroomiah, last autumn. Besides, the deep snows on the high mountains between Qoshnoo and Ravandooz would doubtless render the passing very difficult, if not impossible, on that route, so early in the season. The same obstacle, deep snows, would also prevent our going, at this time of year, through the mountains, by the still shorter route among the Nestorians.

On the top of the highest ridge on the route between Qoshnoo and Ravandooz, which is called the Pass of Galeea Sheen, meaning in the Koordish language, the azure-pillar, is a dark marble pillar, eight or ten feet high, placed on a large pedestal, on which are inscriptions in the cuneiform character. This pillar was visited a few years ago by Major Rawlinson, who copied the inscriptions, and supposes the pillar to commemorate the journey of Alexander, on this route, in his pursuit of Darius.

The locusts are now making their appearance on the declivities around the town of Saouj Boolak, to the no small apprehension and sorrow of the inhabitants. There is a certain bird in the East, resembling the sparrow in size, which eagerly devours the locusts, and there is a prevalent belief, among all classes in these lands, that water from some reputedly sacred localities attracts this bird. At Shirza, for instance, there is a spring which is regarded as such a locality; and at Ardebil is another. A bottle of water, purchased with money, from the Moolah who presides over the spring, was lately brought from this latter locality to Saouj Boolak, as an antagonist to the locusts. And yesterday there was a rumor abroad, that a flock of the sapient birds, attracted by the power of the mysterious water, was approaching the town; and a band of musicians was immediately mustered, to go out and escort them, as a token of the popular joy, but the whole proved to be only a rumor. The bird did not respond to the noisy welcome by making its appearance.

May 2—We rose early, our horses were soon at our quarters, and we were on our way. We recrossed the stone bridge by which we had approached Saouj Boolak, and followed the narrow valley of the river on the northern bank, our course being a little to the South of West. The mountain scenery, on each side of the river, was at once grand and beautiful, and strongly reminded me of the first stage on the route from Trebizond to Erzeroom, and vividly recalled my impressions and feelings on my first land journey in these eastern countries, which was on that route. The mountains were verdant to their summits; and small fields of wheat, and thrifty orchards of the pear and apricot, skirted the margins of the river, at frequent intervals.

About five miles above Saouj Boolak is the small village of Byram Shah, a Koordish village, as are all others in these regions. A short distance above Byram Shah our road turned more directly toward the West, and at length the river, so deep and furious below that it could not be crossed except by the bridge, being now much swollen by the melting

snow on the mountains, suddenly disappeared, and we saw only small brooks gliding down as many sloping valleys, which radiated in the mountains before us, from the larger one that we had followed. Near this junction is the village of Diarbakoor.

Our course now lay on one of the large brooks, along the margin of which we wound our way upward and still upward, beguiled by the charming views, the odors, and the sounds, that regaled our senses, till the brook had become a tiny rill, and we found ourselves almost at the summit of a snow-capped ridge. Our enjoyment of nature had been exquisite, during our ascent. There were, still, small fields of wheat, and clusters of apricot, pear, apple, and walnut trees, on the margin of the brook, the trees seeming in some places to grow wild, and now in luxuriant blossom and foliage, mingling their various hues like sheets of brilliant nosegays. There was a rich fragrance from the fresh smiling flowers that decked the mountain sides; and the sweet notes of many warbling birds afforded us most grateful music.

We halted for the night near an encampment of nomad Koords. We had come a stage of only about three hours, fourteen or fifteen miles, but were told that there was no other stopping-place beyond us, near human habitations, that we could reach to-day. The place of our encampment was so charmingly rural, and commanded such a variety of grand and beautiful views, that we were not very reluctant to halt, though we had made but a short day's journey.

Till now, we had not pitched our tents. The rainy weather had deterred us. To-day for the first time on our journey, therefore, we tasted the luxury of encamping on the green grass, which was on a level with patches of snow, of inhaling the air pure from its native heavens, and of looking abroad freely on the wonders and delights that a divine hand had spread out around us, instead of being caged in a dark, filthy, native hovel, surcharged with not the most agreeable odors, and swarming with loathsome vermin. We could now dip water from the crystal spring near our tents, and ice it with the snow that lay sparkling in the bright sun near by; and we could obtain plenty of fresh milk, yogoord and kimak, from our migratory neighbors.

On the southern bank of the Saouj Boolak river, about two miles above the bridge which is near the town, we observed to-day several more soda-springs, marked by their white conical mounds, like those already mentioned. The common rocks on our route are a bluish limestone, and more or less red sandstone; and such are the prevailing rocks in all these regions. Several clusters of large juniper trees, by the roadside, also arrested my attention to-day, and, on inquiring, I was told that this tree is very common in all parts of Koordistan, and on some of the islands of the lake of Oroomiah.

May 3—About day-break, we were waked up by a sudden gust of wind, which, with almost the violence of a tornado, caused our tents to dance like witches, and the rain soon fell in a heavy shower. Our tent-pins began to give way, and they would have failed, and let the tents down upon us, had not the ropes been immediately secured by means of large stones. The rain continued to pour down for an hour, and our prospect, it must be confessed, was sufficiently dreary, high up the mountain, as we were, with no human habitation near us, except those of our rude, nomad neighbors. The clouds, however, at length cleared up, and the rising sun broke out upon us almost as suddenly as the storm had done, and it was all the more grateful to us, in the drenched state of our tents, from the strength and suddenness of the contrast.

We proceeded about two miles, still in a western direction, and reached the mountain-top. From the lofty summit of this ridge, scenes of most sublime grandeur

suddenly opened upon our view. Far below and beyond us lay the plain of Lejan; and long its southern border stretched the great mountain-range which forms the general boundary between Turkey and Persia, now covered with snow half way to its base, and with its summit towering in the dim distance, and blending with the skies; while its lower sections, and the lower ridges that were nearer to us, of various heights, and every diversity of contour, were in one case clothed in the softest and most beautiful green, and in another projecting in the roughest and boldest crags and profiles of naked sterile rock, this endless variety of aspect stretching away thirty, forty or fifty miles, and limited only by the horizon.

Our course now changed again to a little south of West, and lay down a steep, narrow, rocky ravine, four or five miles. The plain of Lejan then began to open distinctly to our view, in a narrow valley, which gradually expanded, as we proceeded, until one of the most picturesque and charming landscapes that I ever beheld filled our vision; and it was of such vast extent that the eye wearied in attempting to take it in.

The plain of Lejan is naturally one of the finest in the East. It must be nearly fifty miles in length, and from two to twenty in breadth, sweeping around from the north-eastern extremity, where we entered it, in the form of a crescent, to the West and South, the middle portion of it being much the broadest. This plain is gently undulating. Its soil is rich, and well watered; but most of it lies entirely waste, its Koordish masters and occupants having little disposition to cultivate it. A small river is gradually formed from the mountain ravines on the north-eastern side, which the inhabitants denominate simply Rubri, of the river; and another, of about the same size, the Levan, enters the plain from the mountains on the South-West. The two, beside many smaller streams, sufficient to sustain thrifty villages all over the district, uniting their waters, flow onward to the South, toward the Persian district of Serdasht.

On the part of the plain which we first entered, we observed several clusters of juniper trees, shading a few graves, which, as our muleteers told us, mark very sacred localities; and they proceeded to entertain us with some account of the marvellous cures performed here, and the judgments which the presiding spirits of these places are said to have visited on many persons, dispensing them at will, respectively to their favorites and those whom they chance to dislike. The muleteers also told us that, among the other merits of this charming country, it is much celebrated for the production of a great variety of medicinal plants and grasses, physicians from India, even, coming here to gather them.

Lejan is nominally Persian soil, and is reckoned as belong to Sooldooz, from which it is separated only by a low range of mountains. But the wild Bilbos Koords who inhabit it acknowledge little allegiance to any government. The Persians of Sooldooz, for instance, two years ago, repaired an old fort in Lejan, to aid them in maintaining their authority; but the Koords soon summarily demolished it, the garrison hardly escaping with their lives.

Our stage to-day was about thirty miles. We were on our horses nine hours, travelling slowly, at the pace of a caravan. We encamped for the night at the south-western extremity of the plain, just at the base of the high, snowy mountains that here form the boundary between Persia and Turkey, near the village of Hanee. This village is the residence of Kara-ina Agha, the most prominent chief of the large, powerful tribe of the Bilbos Koords, and the same who was the most conspicuous leader of the Koordish hordes which invaded Oroomiah last autumn, and sacked some fifteen villages on the southern part of the plain, the near chiefs of Ooshnoo having implored him to

come to their aid, and share in the spoil. Our anticipations of being the guest of the man whose name is so terrible as a robber, were naturally somewhat peculiar, and not altogether agreeable. We however failed to see the chief, who was absent from his village, having gone to-day to Ooshnoo. His eldest son, Mourad Agha, about thirty years old, welcomed us very cordially and of his own accord immediately ordered for us a sumptuous supper, which, in compliance with our choice, was brought to our tents, where he and a younger brother joined us at the table, and spent the evening. He is a fine-looking man, and generous and hospitable, yet doubtless, like his father, lawless in his habits, and of a bloody disposition. He treated us with great respect, and with the utmost kindness.

This young chief stated to us that he had never known Europeans to pass through Lejan before, though they may have done it. There certainly is, however, more or less danger in travelling here, at the present time. Our party were thrown into a momentary apprehension to-day, when about ten miles distant from our stopping place, on meeting a Bilbos chief whom our muleteers, as he approached us, announced to us as a noted robber, or as they expressed it, "one who fears not God, nor regards man." This chief had with him fifteen or twenty attendants, horsemen, all armed with spears, swords and pistols. Broad, silent desolation reigned around us, in every direction; it was a cloudy day, and toward evening—a fit place and a fit time for bloody men and bloody deeds. The party spread themselves out as they approached us, and drew up around us, so that we were of course entirely in their power. They halted, and the chief demanded who we were, when our principal muleteer adroitly produced a letter which he had procured and brought with him, from a distinguished merchant in Saouj Boolak, addressed to Paroo Khan, an uncle of this chief, bespeaking for us kind treatment. We had failed of seeing that uncle, his village, Peesav, the principal village of Lejan, being several miles distant to the right of our road. The muleteer therefore presented the letter to this chief, assuming that he would extend to us the favor requested of the uncle. The wild Koord acknowledged the compliment, with true oriental politeness, by promptly offering to turn about, and escort us to our menzil. We declined his courteous offer; he politely bowed, thus signifying our release; and we passed on, grateful for the deliverance.

Tomorrow we hope to enter Turkey, where there is a more efficient government, and much less danger from the Koords.

Our host, the young Bilbos chief, expressed a strong desire to be under Turkish, instead of Persian rule, which is a prevalent feeling among most of the Koords in Persia; and it is not strange, considering that, in common with the Turks, they are all of the Soonee [Sunni] sect.

In crossing the plain of Lejan, we observed the mounds of the ancient fire-worshippers, which are to be seen also in Ooshnoo, Souldooz, and other districts of Azerbaijan.

May 4—Moorad Agha, the young Bilbos chief, was again with us at breakfast; he furnished the meal, as he did last evening, which consisted of bread, yogoord, and boiled doshap, or molasses. We held a pleasant conversation of an hour with him, this morning, in the course of which we told him about railroads, electro-magnetic telegraphs, etc., etc., to his no small astonishment and gratification. And he, to take his turn in the narration of marvels, then stated to us an item of important information, which, he said, had just reached him. A remarkably strong wind had arisen, over

beyond Constantinople, so strong that it laid bare a portion of the bed of the sea, and even swept the sand from its bottom, and there revealed a mountain of pure gold! This wonderful locality, the chief continued, is about eight hours, thirty or forty miles, this side of England, and the English had placed a guard over the gold. We told him that we had not before heard of the facts as he stated them. He replied, "There can be no mistake about it. The English Consul at Mosul has received the intelligence, and a Moolah there, who saw the letter containing it, wrote these facts to us." This, doubtless, is one version of the story of the discovery of gold in California, as now current in the wilds of Koordistan.

The chief also told us, as a wonder of another description, which he supposed would interest us, that there is an ancient, lofty, hewn stone-pillar, according to his statements more than twenty feet high, in Lejan, not far from the road over which we had travelled. He stated the color of the pillar to be dark, like the celebrated pillar of Ooshnoo. He did not seem to know whether or not it contained inscriptions. We had not time to return and examine the place defined, and the insecurity of the district would have been an obstacle to our lingering, had we had leisure for the purpose. The pillar is said to be near the village of Lejan.

Our morning visit with the chief made us rather late in starting, but we regretted this the less, as rain, during the night, had drenched our tents, and we wished to dry them by the morning sun, before proceeding, that they might not impose an intolerable burden on the horses that carried them.

Leaving the extensive and charming plain of Lejan, just where we encamped for the night, near the village of Hanee, we commenced ascending the great mountain-range which forms the boundary between Turkey and Persia, the same which, branching off from Mount Ararat, at Bayazeed, runs toward the South and South-East, passes about twenty miles West of Oroomiah, and advancing still, stretches away to the plains of Assyria. The ascent was quite steep. Reaching the top of the first ridge, we had a magnificent view of the beautiful country over which we passed yesterday, and the lofty mountains that bound it. Then descending, and crossing a small elevated, grassy valley, which communicates through a ravine with the plain of Lejan, we ascended another, higher and much broader ridge, passing over a number of patches of deep snow. Here we encountered a heavy shower of rain and sleet, which would have drenched and chilled us, had we not been well guarded by cloaks. The pass over the high, broad ridge which we were crossing, is skirted on either hand by still more lofty mountain-peaks, now covered with deep snow, much of which remains during the year. These mountains, as well as Galeea Sheen, the pass on the route from Ooshnoo, which is just to the North of them, are distinctly visible at Mosul. Springs soon began to appear, all running westward, and instead of hastening to pour themselves into the lake of Oroomiah, like those on the former part of our journey, destined to mingle with the waters of the Tigris, the Persian gulf, and the Indian Ocean. This reminded us that we had now crossed the boundary, and were in Turkey.

Near the summit of the boundary-ridge is a large ancient cemetery, partially shaded by clusters of large juniper trees, and containing one tomb as large as a small building. The place is regarded by the Koords as very sacred, being hallowed by the ashes of a venerable saint, called Sheikh Muhammed. On the graves, and around them, are many beautiful flowers, probably placed there, of the kind which we met with in the district of Dole. I marveled from whence so many dead had been brought to the

mountain-top for internment; but the secret was soon explained by our coming to villages.

Balak is the name of the first district, on this route, in Turkey. It is in the province of Ravandooz, and in the Pashalik of Bagdad. It is a large district, extending to a considerable distance beyond the town of Ravandooz. Our stage to-day was about thirty miles, in a direction still a little to the South of West. After entering Turkey, our way lay down a narrow, steep, rocky valley. The numerous springs, and the melting snow on the mountains all around us, soon enlivened our way by a large stream, which was constantly swelling its waters by receiving tributaries from the smaller valleys on either hand. This proved to be the Ravandooz river, an important branch of the Zab, the ancient Zabatus of Xenophon. The lower sections of the valley were at length dotted with many small green fields of wheat, and with oak bushes and small trees, from which the gall-nut is gathered, scattered all about on the mountain-side, here and there adorned by wild grape-vines, gracefully creeping up their branches. The whole scene, so different from the bare mountains of Persia, reminded us strongly of our loved native land.

Proceeding down the deep valley, the mountains on either side piercing, and often peering far above the clouds, we at length came to the village of Rayat, at a point where two other considerable streams entered the one we were following. Here our loads were suddenly seized by some rude-looking Koords, who proved to be custom-house men, and who supposed we might have merchandize. They were so reluctant to believe our declaration to the contrary, that they actually led away the horse that carried our provision-boxes, to examine them; and sharp words passed between them and our muleteers and companions, and blows were threatened on the part of the Koords, before they would yield the point and let the horse go. Then our men, in their turn, feeling that they had the advantage, enjoyed the satisfaction of frightening the other party, by taking down their names, and threatening to represent their rude conduct at Ravandooz, which the Kurds earnestly besought them not to do. Annoying as was this interference, it was still a grateful token that we were in a land of government, order, and general security.

As we proceeded, our principal muleteer, who, it seems, was won over by the men at the custom-house, to act as their apologist, repeatedly, when he met persons, came up to my horse, took hold of the skirt of my garment, and then addressed those who were passing him. I could not understand the jingle of his Koordish conferences, but on inquiry I found that he was telling them to announce to their friends at the custom-house, that he had hold of the skirt of my garment, entreating me not to represent them to their superiors, and had hope of prevailing on me not to do it; while he had, in fact, said nothing to me on the subject. Such adepts are even rude Koords in the art of finesse. This same muleteer, to enhance his own consequence on the road, was in the habit of magnifying ours, calling us consuls and great consuls; and in one instance he told the people of a village which we were passing, that he had charge of four consuls, on their way to Mosul, an English, a French, a Persian and a Turkish, Mar Yohannan and Deacon Isaac being pointed out as the two last. The ignorant, simple villagers were easily duped by such statements.

The village of Rayat has a strong castle, built of stone and lime, and the same is true of most other villages in this valley, and, indeed, in this district, the fortifications having been erected fifteen or twenty years ago, by Muhammed Pasha, or Koor Meer,

blind chief, so called from the defect of an eye, the powerful chief of Ravandooz who rebelled against the government of the Sultan, and spread ravages throughout Koordistan, and sent terror into all the adjacent parts of Turkey and Persia.

Proceeding still down the valley, we came to Derbent, a fine village, though not large, snugly lodged in the fork formed by the Ravandooz river and a large tributary which enters it from the North. So great is the descent of this river, and so powerful the stream, that, were it in a civilized land, it might turn the wheels of thousands of factories, drawing wool for manufacture from the myriads of flocks throughout Koordistan; and the same may be said of many other similar rivers, among the lofty mountains of these wild regions. The site of Derbent is so steep and narrow that the houses, which are built of stone, are constructed in tiers, the base of one tier being on a level with the top of another. Beautiful trees skirt the streams above and below the village, and small fields of wheat, and even a vineyard of a few rods square, were smiling near it.

These rocky mountain-sides were now covered with a thick growth of moss, the sight of which also reminded us gratefully of home, as we seldom see mosses in Persia, owing probably to the dryness of the atmosphere.

Proceeding a few miles below Derbent, our road being rocky, and often very narrow and difficult, where a single mis-step of our horses would have dashed us down a hundred or more feet, into the foaming river, we reached an expansion of the narrow valley, the village of Memehall lying back on a gentle declivity half a mile distant from the road. Here we halted for the night, deeply impressed with the wonders and sublimities still spread out around us by the Creator's hand.

A Koordish traveller who passed along, told us that a great Turkish army had assembled at Ravandooz, to take a rebel chief, "so vast an army," said the Koord, "that one would call it the resurrection." On reaching Ravandooz we learned that a thousand troops had come from Bagdad to the neighboring district of Khoys, to chastise some refractory Koords, who had fled towards Persia as the army advanced. The rude peasant who first reported the matter to us, must have been very much over-excited by the sight of a thousand regular troops.

May 5—Although we pitched our tents last night about half a mile from any village, here in the wilds of Koordistan, we still slept securely, without a watch; which strongly impresses us with the fact that there is a very different government in Turkey from that of Persia. Fifteen years ago, this region was regarded as entirely impassable for Europeans. But fearful Koor Meer was at length conquered by the concentrated efforts of the Turks and the Persians, and these mountains have since been brought into effectual subjection.

Our stage to-day was about thirty miles, on a course still nearly West. Following down the Ravandooz river, we soon left the expansion of the valley in which we had encamped. This was succeeded by a rocky pass, so narrow, steep and frightful, that we deemed it unsafe to dismount. There was only a shelving parapet, for a considerable distance, along the side of the cliff, which descended a hundred feet below us, almost perpendicularly, to the river, and towered many hundred feet above us. This rocky pass was succeeded by another expansion of the valley, broader than the first, and that again by another rocky pass, bolder and wilder than the former, and so on. The sides of the mountains were clothed with a rich growth of gall-nut oaks, and the lower declivities, with numberless beautiful fields of wheat and barley, nearly to the edge of the river, the margins of which were skirted by thrifty trees and hedges of various kinds. Beside the

gall-nut oak, the juniper, the walnut and the mulberry were very common, and grapevines, growing wild, often hung so thickly over our path as to impede our passing. But we rejoiced to be hedged up by trees, so rare on the desert mountains of Persia. The scenery, on the whole, of to-day's stage, was marked by beauty, grandeur, and sublimity; and such was the variety combining all the elements of each, from the frowning snow-capped summit down to the smiling vineyard, that it is fruitless to attempt a very minute description.

After following down the eastern ranch of the roaring Ravandooz river, about four miles, we crossed the stream by a bridge of timbers covered over with cross-sticks, stones and sand; the river being spanned by the length of a timber, resting on a notch in the cliff on one side, and on a stone abutment on the other.

Following the south-western bank, we then passed three villages, one on the eastern, and two on the western side of the stream, namely, Choman Rizan, and Omarava. I name them in the order of their location on the river. They consist of miserable stone and earth structures, half buried in the ground, but are surrounded by the rarest charms of rural loveliness, patches of wheat of the purest green, and hedges of fruit-trees, and small vineyards.

At the last village above named, we re-crossed the river by a bridge of timbers resting on a stone abutment on each bank, and on two pillars in the stream. Here we left the river, the road, which still follows it, being pronounced by our muleteers so dangerous that, of every two horses that should attempt to travel over it, one at least would fall and be dashed in pieces. We immediately ascended a high mountain-ridge, a spur of the general range, which is clothed with a heavy forest of gall-nut oak; I might perhaps rather say, an orchard, and yet it was not precisely that, the trees not being in rows, but scattered in careless irregularity, so far apart as to allow a rich growth of grass under them. The quantity of gall-nuts yielded annually by each bush, or tree, varies from half a dozen to many pounds, according to the size and thriftiness. The labor of gathering them, scattered as the trees and bushes are, over the Koordish mountains, scores and hundreds of miles in different directions, must be immense, furnishing employment to multitudes of men, women and children, for a considerable period every year.

The descent of this ridge, on the opposite side, was longer and steeper than the ascent. At the foot of it, we came to the village of Chamarakin, similar in appearance to those we had last passed. It lies on the eastern bank of a river of the same name, which is a southern branch of the Ravandooz river and nearly as large as the main stream where we left it. We here crossed this river by a bridge resting on stone abutments and pillars, like the one at Omarava. Leaving the Chamarakin river, we soon struck one of its tributaries, which we followed up two miles, passing through a more charming growth of trees, shrubs, hedges and wild vines, than we had before seen. The walnut was of great size and the sycamore, though not tall, was large and very abundant. We soon came to the village of Dergala, which is romantically situated, on a high point of land, formed by the junction of the stream with a small tributary. A strong castle crowns the brow of the promontory. Dergala is a large village, and is inhabited entirely by Jews. Several children came running to the road to see us, and one man, calling after us for custom-house duties. They addressed us in the Syriac, which is their native language. Their faces all strikingly indicated their nationality.

We had already encountered several slight showers to-day; but the rain now

began to pour down copiously, as we wound our way up another mountain-side. When we had reached the summit, and descended a short distance on the opposite side, our muleteer determined to halt there for the Sabbath; but the place was too elevated to be comfortable, and too distant from any human habitation to allow us to procure provisions. We therefore proceeded, notwithstanding the reluctance of the muleteer, and soon descended one of the steepest declivities I had ever encountered. The rain was still falling profusely--"the mercy of God," as the muleteer piously remarked, when some one of our party alluded to the inconvenience which we were likely to experience from it. Our descent would have been rendered entirely impracticable, by slippery mud, had not the surface of the ground been covered with a layer of crumbled lime-stone, so thick as to absorb the rain as it fell, which afforded us a deep and easy foothold. This descent was quite long as well as steep. After reaching the bottom of the declivity, we followed down a narrow valley several miles; but the rain still falling, the road becoming very muddy, and our loads wet and heavy, we abandoned the purpose which we had entertained, of reaching Ravandooz, though now within six or eight miles of the town. We halted for the Sabbath near the village of Mawill, which is situated about half a mile North of the main road. Here, too we were surrounded by scenery combining the same grandeur, beauty, and variety as before noticed. The valley and plain of Ravandooz appeared toward the West, though still partially shut from us by spurs of the mountains.

We were reminded of the change of climate, to-day by observing barley in the ear. We have descended hundreds, and probably thousands of feet, since entering the Turkish territory, and shall descend much more before reaching the plains of Assyria and Mesopotamia. This great descent accounts for the overpowering heat of those plains.

May 6—A bright sun rose upon us this morning, and spread an almost unearthly hue over the charming scenery around us. Although by accident, in our haste, in the rain, we had chosen this as a practicable spot for spending the Sabbath quietly, we could not, in any circumstances, have selected a more desirable situation. We had ascended a low, but bold ridge that runs down from the village near which we had encamped, transversely, to the centre of the valley, and thus commands a fine view of its whole range, up and down, to the distance of fifty or more miles above us, and at least thirty, below, the whole presenting a panorama of green fields, vineyards, grassy hill-sides, and mountain-cliffs, in almost endless succession, all thickly sprinkled over with the gall-nut oaks, which now extended quite to the mountain-tops, excepting a few of the highest points that are covered with snow.

May 7--We were amused this morning by the making out of our reckoning, which, as our attendants were unable to converse with the two peasants in Koordish, was attempted by a blind Koordish beggar whom our muleteer had led by the hand, several hours, on Saturday, on his way toward Ravandooz, and who knew a little Turkish. Impressed with the high importance of the agency entrusted to him, he seemed inspired literally to magnify his office as accountant, rattling over and over the list of paras, ten of which make a cent, that we were to pay for the simple articles of food that we had purchased, and reiterating the same at the top of his shrill voice, that we and the villagers might clearly comprehend both the charge for each item, and the sum total, till we were heartily wearied as well as amused with the jingle of his protracted calculations, and directed him to stop.

We proceeded down the valley in which we had encamped for the Sabbath,

about three miles toward the West, and then came again upon the Ravandooz river, which dashed down from the East, much increased since we had left it, by receiving several tributaries from the mountain-valleys. We now followed down the south-eastern bank of the river, as it roared along through the same variety of grand and beautiful scenery as already described. From the base of the lofty ridge on our left, boiled forth several springs, the waters of which, like small rivers, foaming across our road, rushed down the bank, and mingled with the river below. These springs are very striking natural objects.

At the distance of five or six miles from our stopping place, we came in sight of the famed Ravandooz, now hardly two miles distant. It is situated in an undulating valley, of a few miles in extent, which is entirely surrounded by mountains. The town itself is perched upon a rocky declivity, flanked on the North and West by the Ravandooz river, which here suddenly bends toward the South, and on the East by a tributary that enters the river at this place, both having very high, bold, precipitous, rocky banks, the tributary, having cut a winding furrow in the solid rock, sixteen or eighteen feet wide, and more than twenty feet deep, which perfectly serves the purpose of a fosse. On the south, the town is secured, across the gradually ascending mountain-side, between these rivers, by a strong wall of stone and lime, and several towers. It is naturally a very strong place, from its peculiar position; but it can easily be commanded, and has been commanded, by cannon, from all sides of it. The town is farther guarded by an imposing stone castle, perched on a bold hill on the opposite side of the river, about a mile distant toward the South-West, and by numerous smaller castles and towers, in various directions.

The situations of Ravandooz, in this low valley, is hot and not pleasant, yet it is said to be healthy. It is supposed to contain about fifteen hundred families, eighty of which are Jewish, and the rest Koordish. There are Jews, also, in several neighboring villages, and there is one small village of Papal Nestorians, on the road to Ooshnoo, about four miles distant from Ravandooz. The Jews speak the Syriac language. We wished to obtain a specimen of their dialect, but their suspicious old Rabbi would not consent even to write or to dictate a chapter from the New Testament. Four hundred Turkish troops are stationed at Ravandooz, to aid in governing the town and province. The place does not appear, from without, so large as I have stated; but the houses being built in tiers, the flat roof of one serving as the court of that next above it, are very compact, and may amount to fifteen hundred.

This, then, is the famed Ravandooz, the name of which was so terrible in all these regions, when I first came to Persia, as the seat of Koor Meer, as he was familiarly called, who then had twenty thousand wild Koordish warriors in the field, but was finally conquered in 1836, as above stated, by the concentrated efforts of Turkish and Persian armies. He was truly a man of blood. It is related of him, for instance, that on one occasion when his slumbers on the roof of his lofty castle, in summer, were disturbed by the crying of his infant daughter in the cradle near by, he arose in his wrath, took the child by the hand, and hurled her into the river that roars along in its deep bed at the foot of the castle. "God never gave the monster another child," said the Koord, who related to us this instance of his savage cruelty. The Koords have an elegy on the tragical death of his infant daughter, current among them to this day.

Rassoul Pasha, a brother of Koor Meer, succeeded the latter in the government of Ravandooz. But the Turks at length found that their confidence in him was

misplaced, he too discovering symptoms of revolt. Three years ago, he was compelled to flee before an advancing Turkish army, into Persia, from whence, through English interference, he has since been permitted to return as a private person, to reside at Bagdad.

The present governor of Ravandooz is Hajee Muhammed Agha, an honest Turk. Thus has this wild region been effectually subdued, and the Koords transformed, in a few years, from wild marauders into quiet peasants and husbandmen, and the country, from one too fearful to be entered by Europeans, without imminent peril, into an abode of peace and entire security. Success to the arm of Turkish power that works such changes in Koordistan!

One of the most important expeditions of Muhammed Pasha, or Koor Meer, in the height of his devastating career, was an attempt to subdue Tiaree, a short time before I came to Persia. In this attempt he signally failed, and so many of his men were killed in their encounter with the desperate Tiareeans, that, if one of the latter people were to be identified in the region of Ravandooz, he would immediately be slain, to repay blood for blood, unless rescued by the Turks. The savage Emeer, however, laid waste many Christian villages elsewhere, without mercy or partiality during that expedition. The large Papal village of Elkoosh, and many others in that vicinity, were then sacked and nearly destroyed by him.

Our blind accountant made his appearance at our tent again, soon after we encamped. It would seem that he had also acted as banker for our attendants, with the few shillings of Turkish money in his possession, they not yet having obtained money in that currency. This poor beggar was totally blind, and yet he could distinguish small pieces of money with the nicest accuracy, and seemed to enjoy feeling the money, quite as much as if his eyes had rested on the shining metal.

The sound of martial music, toward evening, in the barracks in the town near which we were encamped, was grateful to our ears, the familiar notes transporting us to our early homes. When we remember, too, what European tactics have done, within the last thirty years, to promote the peace and advance the civilization of Turkey, and recently in these wildest portions of that empire, we find it not in our hearts utterly to repudiate the military profession.

We visited the city, so called, though it hardly deserves to be dignified with the name. The houses are built partly of stone, and partly of very large sun-dried bricks. The bricks are made of mud mixed with a large quantity of cut straw, after the style of Egypt of old; the loose sandstone soil is not sufficiently cohesive to serve the purpose of building, without an ample mixture of the straw. Of some of the houses, the lower story is built of stone, and the upper (for many of them are two stories high,) of this kind of brick. The streets are narrow, crooked, and very filthy. The bazaars are hardly worthy of the name, either for their size or the business done in them. A few petty merchants from Mosul seemed to figure in them the most conspicuously. The gall-nut trade must, however, be extensive here, and very important.

We called on the governor, who is a native of Bagdad, an intelligent and very gentlemanly man. Of his own accord he directed a letter to be prepared, bespeaking for us kind treatment on the road. We congratulated him on the favorable changes in progress in Koordistan, of which he was by no means insensible, while he expressed the hope of still greater changes for the better.

We procured Turkish passports at Ravandooz, which would serve us as

travellers in any part of Turkey, for one year. How strange to see a Koordish Moolah, in the wilds of Koordistan, filling out passports for American citizens!

The most influential merchant of Ravandooz, Muhammed Ameen Agha, who is also the vizier of the district, called on us at our tents. He brought to us some ore which he supposed to contain gold, and at his request we took a small quantity of it, proposing to write to him, should we be able to give any valuable information in regard to it. The locality is still a secret with the merchant. He is a very pleasant, intelligent man; has visited Constantinople, Tabreez, and other cities; and I could hardly persuade myself that so civilized a man had grown up in these dark mountains. He was loud in his praises of the change from Koordish to Turkish rule, though himself a Koord, saying that the taxes are now very moderate, and that nothing is taken in the form of fines, or bribes. We should find it difficult to suppose that so mild and gentlemanly a man had ever been allied to bandits; and yet on inquiry it appeared that this same Muhammed Ameen Agha had accompanied Koor Meer on his unsuccessful attempt against Tiaree, perhaps, however, from constraint rather than choice.

May 8—It would be utterly vain to attempt any adequate description of this day's stage. During nearly the whole of it, we were surrounded by the most impressively sublime scenery, and passed over the most difficult roads that I have yet seen. The stage was short, probably less than twenty miles, but so rough that we were seven or eight hours in travelling over it. Our general course was a little to the South of West. Our road, on starting, lay directly through the town of Ravandooz, entering it by a bridge thrown across the tributary of the Ravandooz river, over the natural fosse already mentioned. We wound our way up the narrow, filthy streets, right by the governor's door, near which we met His Excellency attended by a retinue. He obligingly inquired whether he could not farther serve us. In addition to furnishing the letter addressed to the villagers on our route, within his jurisdiction, he had, unsolicited, sent some of his own gate-keepers to guard our tents during the last night, and he seemed quite disposed to show us kindness in every way in his power.

We left the town by a gate at the upper or southern end, and continued our way still up the gradual ascent. We were more impressed with the natural strength of the position of Ravandooz, on rising above it, than we had been on entering it from below. The river and its tributary, as already stated, flank it on three sides, by precipitous, rocky banks that would throw into insignificance the grandeur of the Palisades on the Hudson. These banks rise rapidly, as one ascends, and the distance between those of each stream, as also between the streams themselves, increases. The tributary comes down the mountain-side which we were ascending; but the river itself drives in the opposite direction, right through the solid limestone range, by a narrow gorge of unexampled sublimity, so far as my observation extends, unless the banks of the Niagara below the Falls be excepted.

We now had a fair view of the fearful precipice on which the governor's castle is perched, and from the roof of which, hanging over the rocky bank of the river, one hundred and fifty feet high, the bloody Muhammed Pasha threw his infant daughter. From the same dreadful height he was in the habit of throwing all such of his subjects as he deemed worthy of death, often on the most trivial pretexts, and not unfrequently to obtain their money. We were also pointed to a cliff, on one of the banks of the tributary stream, above the town, of equal height and abruptness, from which two Koordish girls voluntarily cast themselves down, rather than yield to the tyrant's mandate that they should become the wives of two of

his private servants.

The Mosul merchants accompanied us a short distance out of the town, showing us in this, and other attentions, true oriental politeness. Though nominally Papists, converts from the Jacobite Church, they seemed to have little of the bigotry of Rome.

The brow of the ascent, above Ravandooz, is beautifully crowned with a long range of orchards, in which the mulberry, growing to a great size, seemed predominant. These orchards are interspersed with dwellings, and many houses appeared outside the walls of the town, in all directions. Ravandooz is increasing, and will doubtless continue to increase in population, and improve in other respects, under its present good government, and being, as it is, on a great natural route of commerce. Happiness and contentment seem now to prevail among all classes of its inhabitants, as much as they can ever be expected to prevail in an ignorant and immoral community. Jews, as well as Koords, are employed in responsible offices particularly in the custom-houses. And the children of all classes appeared so much more playful and happy than in Persia, sporting merrily in the evening, till a late hour, that we were struck by the contrast as something remarkable.

Receding from the river as we left Ravandooz, we soon came to the brow of a deep valley, of three or four miles in extent, into which we descended by a steep, zig-zag path. This valley is richly cultivated. Among other shrubs in the hedges, is what the Bishop called the pepper bush, in which he was probably correct. It was for some time a problem with us, where the springs of this valley find an egress, but a hidden one at length suddenly appeared, a narrow gorge being cut, as by some mighty convulsion, through the lofty mountain-ridge, here only a few rods broad, which separates this valley from the bed of the river.

In ascending from this valley, we came upon a rocky, though not very steep, declivity of the main mountain-range. The rough, broken stones (which had a singular appearance, being irregularly perforated, though not lave,) were thrown so thickly in our path, and all around us, that it was very difficult to pass over them. Soon, great flocks appeared among the trees and shrubs in every direction, and at length came troops of nomad Koords, moving with their families and cattle from the warm regions below, where they had spent the winter, to spread themselves over the wild boundary-mountains. They were the Harkees, who usually pass the winter in the pashalik of Mosul, and the summer on the mountains above Tergawer, toward which they were now migrating.

Our road was so rough and narrow, up the ascent, and across the mountain-top, that we found it almost impossible to crowd along by the thronging troops of Koords, consisting of men, women and children, with loads of tents, and rude cooking-utensils, and cattle. But how was the difficulty increased as we proceeded! We soon found ourselves on the brink of a precipice skirting the river on the South-East, that is almost perpendicular, and here at least fifteen hundred feet high. The problem now was, not only to descend this fearful precipice, but also to pass hundreds of Koords, with loaded horses, families and cattle, on their way up it. We at first could see no road, but on carefully looking down from the giddy height, we observed Koords threading their way on the side of the precipice, in various directions, along narrow parapets, little conceiving for some time that this was also one and the same road, and our road, running in a zig-zag course, successively in different directions, wherever ledges and breaks, wide enough for a foot-path, could be found or built up.

We went forward, crowding by the Koords where the path admitted of two animals passing each other, and waiting for them, or they for us, where it was too narrow for

passing, till at length, looking up or down, we seemed to be hanging in the air, the river foaming in miniature still far below us, and the rocks, along which eagles darted majestically, reaching as to the sky, far over our heads. The danger was now imminent, from above as well as below. The loose stones placed along the parapets above us, might be easily jostled off by the thronging Koords, and come dashing down upon us. Only one stone, however, fell, and that one harmed none of us. We safely threaded our way back and forth, on the side of this awfully towering precipice, till we had descended within a few hundred feet of the river; when a tributary, the Khalifan, of considerable size, came rushing down from the South-West, through a very deep gorge, and with banks as solid, steep, and bold as those of the Ravandooz river itself. Leaving the river, our path now wound around upon a cliff on the South, forming one bank of the tributary; and the path slightly descending, while the stream descended rapidly in the opposite direction, we at length came upon its margin. The lofty mountain-sides on either hand had now become somewhat less precipitous, and their lower sections were clothed with a heavy growth of oak trees and bushes, and the margins of the stream with rich grass. The Koords were encamping in large numbers on the river-banks, their flocks, herds and horses feeding upon the rank grass, and they themselves enjoying the cool shade. The wild stream now formed a succession of very grand cataracts, extending, at short intervals, about a mile, some of which were nearly fifty feet high. What could be more grand than their dashing foam, and wild roar, amid these mountains? And to heighten the interest of the scene, now and then a beautiful cascade came leaping over the cliffs and plunging into the river. We at length crossed from the eastern to the western bank of this stream on a frail bridge supported by stone abutments and two stone pillars; and still following it a mile or two farther, we issued from the mountain-gorge, bounded here by bold, rocky pillars, as if to guard nature's wonders and mysteries within, and came to open meadows and fields, where we gladly encamped. The village of Khalifan was half a mile up the river, the only village we saw to-day.

Low ridges lay beyond us on the South and West, covered with oak trees and shrubs; but we had now completed the passage of the great Koordish range, a range far more wild, rugged and magnificent than I had ever expected to find it on this route, and more strikingly displaying the wonders of the Creator's handy works than any of the wild mountains I had before crossed in the East.

Although the hundreds of Koords whom we met in our descent of the fearful precipice, greatly enhanced our danger and our fatigue, they at the same time afforded us much entertainment. They were about equally distributed in families of men, women and children, with their herds and flocks, the men being heavily armed, and the women, the older children, and the quadrupeds, except those very young, more heavily laden, and in all conceivable ways. Some of the women had cradles lashed to their backs, with young children in them, and often, if the child was old enough, it sat upright on the top of the cradle, with its feet astride of the mother's neck. Other women had large loads of cooking utensils, in sacks, bound upon their shoulders. Many of the children had young lambs and kids, too feeble for the ascent, in their arms; and they and the women, in addition to the burdens they bore, often led mares followed by their foals, the mares being also laden with large sacks of wheat, with rugs, and with tents. Cows in some cases had their young calves bound upon their backs, and in other cases, sacks filled with children, or with lambs, or both together, slung across them, on the top of their loads. None were not laden, whether man or beast, except the lordly husbands, and the extremely young. Our

sympathy would have been excited for the poor females thus brutally tasked, sometimes even carrying the guns of their husbands, in addition to their other loads, had not these women, from long endurance of hardship, appeared as robust as the oxen and cows they drove. We saw few who seemed fatigued in ascending, with their burdens, the cliff of which the descent was so arduous to us. They moved cheerfully on, and very few of their children were crying, unless from fear of us.

Numerous and immense flocks of sheep and goats passed our tents, after we encamped, belong to the Harkee Koords whom we had met on the road. Our muleteers and companions tried repeatedly to purchase a lamb, but in vain. It is not deemed profitable to sell them when so young; and from the many scores in each flock the shepherds would, on no account, part with one, till a flock passed in which there was a lamb that had been lamed, and could not travel; that one the muleteer obtained.

We had encamped for the night at the south-western base of the high mountain along the frightful cliffs of which, engulfing the rivers, we had clambered. Three soldiers from Ravandooz stopped at the same place, who entertained us with narratives of the important events that had transpired near us. When Muhammed Pasha, or Koor Meer, was vanquished, for instance, the turks drew their cannon up this steep mountain-promontory, by ropes, and then dragged them along on the top of the snow-capped ridge, being of course unable to transport them by the route we had travelled. On the little plain, too, where we were, according to the statement of these soldiers, armies have often encamped, in their expeditions against the refractory Koords. The Turkish army in Khoy, a day's journey from this place, is now in pursuit of the chief of the Navar Koords, who is the master of ninety villages, is very powerful, and is much feared in all these regions. He is now flying like a partridge from mountain to mountain, still often committing robberies, though closely pursued.

May 9—Our course was nearly South-West to-day, and our stage about twenty miles. We first crossed a broken ridge, six or eight miles broad, which elsewhere might be called a low mountain, but is hardly entitled to that name, so ear to the lofty ranges we had recently passed. Our road across this ridge was very stony and rough, though nowhere very steep. The ridge is covered with oak trees and shrubs, like the higher mountains, with many small fields of wheat, and some fine vineyards scattered here and there. Reaching its western brow, we came in sight of a great undulating plain, stretching full thirty miles, and probably forty, from North-West to South-East, and at least ten miles broad. Low, broken mountain-ridges appeared beyond it. Across the widest part of this plain was rolling a large river, now faintly seen in the distance; and on inquiry we were told that the noble stream before us was the Zab, the Zabatus of ancien history, which Xenophon and the ten thousand crossed. The Zab breaks its way through a high mountain-barrier, stretching along the northern side of this plain, and far still to the westward, which is like an iron escarpment, reared there to guard the sublimities of the loftier mountains behind it. Nor very far back of this barrier are the principal Nestorian districts, as Jeloo, Bass, Tekhome, and tiaree. The gorge through which the river Zab bursts forth from the mountains, as seen by us at a distance, appeared fearfully rugged and sublime.

We passed down from the stony ridge which we had crossed this morning, by a rough descent, and our way was also impeded by throngs of migratory Koords, who were still crowding by us. They were a part of the great Harkee tribe, so many of whom passed us yesterday, with here and there a few Shekoiks from Oroomiah, who were driven in this direction, last year, by the scarcity occasioned by the locusts in that province, and who, like

the others, were not retreating from the hot plains of Assyria to the cool ridges of the snow-capped Koordish mountains. We could not help being impressed with the wealth of some of the Koordish chiefs, in passing such thronging thousands of sheep, and hundreds of horses and cattle.

We left the district of Balak in crossing the stony ridge. The great plain, which we were not entering, is in the district of Hareer. The Koords who inhabit it are of the Soorikchee tribe. The plain contains many villages, and much of it is well cultivated. Great fields of wheat were waving in every direction, now fully eared, and the barley was assuming a golden hue for the harvest. We felt the sun to be very warm, as we were crossing this plain, and were thus reminded of the great descent, which we had made from the elevated plains of Persia. We at length crossed a deep valley in the centre of the plain.

Great limestone strata protruded themselves just above the surface, in this valley and elsewhere on the plain; and in one section, of a mile or two in extent, I observed striking specimens of diluvium, or drift.

In crossing this valley we had approached within a mile of the Zab, near the village of Kandeel, where one route to Mosul crosses the river; but we now bore away from the stream, which here runs toward the South-West, and proceeded directly across the plain, this being considered the nearest road.

We encamped near the low mountain-ridge, which bounds the plain of Hareer on the south, about a mile from the village of Harash. The ridge is covered with small oak shrubs, but very few appeared on the plain itself.

It was interesting to find ourselves now so near the river Aab, long famed in history, and which draws most of its waters from the wild mountains occupied by the Nestorians.

Of the simple, primitive manners, which we observed among the Koords on our way, their style of mutual salutation arrested our attention. When two men meet, they grasp each other's right hand, which they simultaneously raise, and each kisses the hand of the other. And when a man and woman meet, if familiar acquaintances, the former bows his neck to the latter, who kisses it, which forcibly reminded us of the falling upon the neck, and kissing it, so often mentioned in the Scriptures.

Near the spot where we encamped, were many Koordish tents; and on a hill at a short distance, the chief of this district, Bayaz Agha, was sitting on his fleet horse, at the time of our arrival, with spear in hand, and surrounded by a retinue. Our muleteer went to him, and showed him the letter of the governor of Ravandooz, directing that our tents be watched at night by the peasants, etc., and the chief, after some sly intimations from his servants, that we were "good game" for him, and some petulant words to the muleteer, finally ordered four of his men to act as our guard, but still shows far less deference for his superior, than the Koords in the wild mountains of Balak, more recently subdued. The people where we stopped yesterday had, moreover, warned us of the marauding propensities of the Koords of Hareer; and taking that premonition in connection with the suspicious appearance of Bayaz Agha, in his conference with our muleteer, and the fact that, instead of coming to welcome us, when we encamped, though near us, he and his save-looking party pranced away behind the hills, brandishing their spears, we were led to apprehend that he might seriously entertain the idea of making us his game by night, and perhaps through the watchmen who he had promised as our guard. We therefore struck our tents just at sunset, and moved onward across the ridge at the foot of which we had encamped. We passed up the ridge by a zig-zag path, about two miles, and reached its summit; and descending a short distance on the opposite side, we came to the village of

Babajeejik. It was now dark, and deeming it safe to lodge in this village, and wishing to start very early the next morning, to avoid the heat of mid-day, we did not pitch our tents, but spread our beds in the open air, on the roof of one of the houses.

The village of Babajeejik is romantically situated on the southern declivity of this mountain-ridge. It contains forty houses built of stone, is guarded by a castle, and has a mosk of considerable size. Just above the village there is a very sacred cemetery, called Monsofee Karasoolee, which is embowered by large trees. The village itself seems, indeed, to be quite a religious place. The kethodeh of it is himself a sheikh, and dervishes were praying and chanting in the mosk till a late hour in the evening, who concluded their devotions by repeating in exact concert, "There is no God but God," and then simply the name of God a hundred times.

May 10—We slept soundly on the roof till 2 o'clock A.M. when our muleteer waked us, and we were soon mounted, and on the road. We advanced about fifteen miles before breakfast, the first half of the way toward the South-West, and the last half, nearly West, and the last half, nearly West, over a very broken region. In descending the low ridge from Babajecjik, we passed through a deep, rugged ravine, which terminated in abrupt, rocky pillars; and at that point we came to a valley running transversely, through which flows a considerable stream from the South-East toward the Zab. This valley and its river are called Dara Beeroosh. There is a castle perched on a bold cliff a mile south of our road. This castle, which is called Deveeree, was one of the outposts of the rebel Muhammed Pasha of Ravandooz, in his resistance to the Turks.

Rising from this valley, we passed over a section of ledges, some of soft sandstone and limestone rocks, and others of sand and earth, among which were striking specimens of drift. We had descended a great distance this morning, but our ascent was not nearly as great; and when we finally reached the summit of the highest ridge, we had most magnificent views of the great plains of Assyria, stretching away in the distance beyond us.

The lofty, rugged mountain, which we had been crossing for several days, had often filled us with inexpressible emotions of sublimity; but the vastness of the level plains now before us, bounded only by the sky, so far as our vision could extend, appeared no less sublime.

To the left of our route, on the south, lay the immense fertile plain of Arbil, or Arbeela, on which Alexander conquered Darius; and on our right lay the great and equally fertile plain of Noker, of which the chief town is Akra. The river Zab was rolling in the distance before us, and a low mountain, of small extent, far to the West, marked the position of Mosul, on the plain of ancient Nineveh. How venerable, as well as grand and sublime, is the scene on which we now gazed, an early cradle of the human race, and the arena of many momentous events of its history, both sacred and profane!

Descending from the height, which so advantageously commands these impressive views, over ridges still more or less broken, the sandstone and limestone being so friable as to become of itself arable earth, a process obviously and rapidly going on, we at length halted for breakfast at the small village of Bawahallen, which is pleasantly situated above a deep glen filled with fruit trees, among which the fig and pomegranate and grape vines were conspicuous. The houses of this village, as also of two other small ones that we passed this morning, are of the most frail construction, the roofs of some of them being covered with straw, and the walls consisting, some of the stone so friable, and some of sticks woven together in wicker-work, plastered over with a thin coat of mud. There can be little winter here, or the people could not live in such frail tenements. There are three families of Jews in Bawahalen, and fifteen of Koords, who are still the prevailing inhabitants

on our route.

Among the most common shrubs which we observed this morning is one bearing pods, supposed by some to be "the husks which the swine did eat," with which the prodigal would fain have filled his belly. The bush grows from three to ten feet high, and the pods are like those of a large bean, three or four hanging in a cluster. From the leaf of this same shrub a species of coarse silk is made. The people of Bawahallen told us that the worm, which forms it, does not die in the web, but escapes, and becomes a butterfly, being very different from the common silk-worm. The web is formed on the bushes, without any care on the part of the cultivator, till it is ready to be gathered. The fabric made of this material is much valued by the natives, and extensively worn by the women in this region, and in the Koordish mountains, usually in the form of black dresses. It is called *kazik*. The oaks were few on our stage to-day, and trees of any kind fewer and much smaller than in the higher regions.

After breakfast, we lingered several hours for our horses to bait and rest, under the grateful shade of a large juniper, and then mounted and road fifteen miles more, and halted for the night at the village of Reshwan. Our general course during this ride was South-West. The first half of our way lay over rough undulations; but these were less rough than the broken ridges which we had previously crossed, and the soil, where the rocks did not protrude above the surface, was very fertile, and extensively cultivated. Wheat and barley, as is the case in all these regions, are the staple crops on the ground. The soft limestone and sandstone strata often rose above the surface. In some cases, we observed the rocky strata to be very thin, often not more than a foot in thickness, lying upon a rich stratum of red earth of indefinite depth. In one case, the earth on all sides had been washed away from the rock, which lay like an immense table, but little inclined, and supported by its eery pedestal to the height of several feet. The Koords struck with the singular appearance, and thinking it something very mysterious, had covered the rock with heaps of small stones as votive offerings. On all sides of us, now, the scene was one of vast irregularity, the rocky ledges and undulations, stretching away scores of miles to the East and West, being so extensive as to weary with the general sameness. On this part of our stage, also, I observed sections of drift.

We were all the way gradually descending, and at length came in full view of the city of Arbela, which loomed up distinctly, about twenty miles distant, in the bosom of the magnificent plain of the same name, that stretched away to the south and West as far as the eye could reach, with only the sky to bound the horizon.

While we were passing over these fertile undulations, two antelopes started up just before us, and skipped over the hills in all their native beauty, wildness and fleetness. They are said to be common, as well as wolves, bears, and wild hogs, in all these regions.

We at length left the undulations, and came down upon a great, level, alluvial plain, one of the most fertile that I have seen in the East. It was the northern extremity of the plain of Arbeela. Trees and shrubs had now disappeared on all sides, with the rare exception of a shade-tree. Great fields of wheat and barley, of the richest growth, were waving in every direction; and grass, wherever the ground was not occupied with fields of grain, was rank enough for the mower's scythe. Soon, these fields will be ripe for the harvest, and the rich grass will wither under the scorching sun, there being but little rain here, after this season, and the land not being irrigated.

Reshwan, where we encamped for the night, is a Koordish village of about one hundred houses, with two houses of Jews who speak the Syriac. The walls of the houses

are built of mud, and the roofs, which are doubly inclined, are covered with straw, fastened to the timbers by strong reeds, which are an abundant product of these plains. The straw is in some cases plastered over with a thin coating of mud. The name of this district is Bostora; it is within the jurisdiction of Ravandooz. A small river, also called Bostora, comes down from the South-East, dividing the province of Ravandooz, at this place, from that of Arbeela. At Reshwan, we were within twelve or fifteen miles of the town of Arbela, which is nearly South from that village. This town is partly built on a circular hill, that part being enclosed by a wall, and the rest is around the base of the hill. It now contains only about twenty-five hundred or three thousand families of Koords and Turks, with twenty families of Christians, half of them Jacobites, and the other half Papal Nestorians, a sad decrease from the amount of its population in ancient times. It is much resorted to for trade, by the nomad Koords, and the Arabs.

During a part of our ride to-day, the summits of the higher Nestorian mountains rose to our view, which had before been concealed by our nearer vicinity to the ranges that separate them, on the south, from the lower table-lands and plains. Deacon Isaac, who has a very quick eye and mind, as a traveller, was able to identify most of these towering mountains, and to tell us the districts to which they respectively belong.

As we looked around from our tents at our stopping-place, we could not help being awed with a deep feeling of vastness, by the great extent of our horizon; the almost interminable plains melting away in the clear azure sky, excepting on the North, where the loftiest ridges of Koordistan reared their snow-capped heads at a great distance, a sight most grateful to us; we were panting from the extreme heat of the plains.

The Koordish chief of the district of Bostora is Sayed Hassan, who resides in the village of Reshwan. He had now gone to Ravandooz, but his son, who was encamped with the people of the village, on the bank of the river, half a mile above, sent us a watch of two men to guard our tents at night, and seemed much more obliging than the Koords where we halted yesterday. The people of this district live in tents for a few weeks, till about a month later than the present time, and then return to their houses, finding their tents insufficient to shield them against the intense heat of this climate.

May 11—We rose early, and rode five or six miles over the fertile vale of Bostora, which we had entered yesterday, along a continuous succession of the richest fields of wheat and barley, and reached the bank of the river Zab. In one or two of the fields the people were already harvesting barley, and we remarked this peculiarity in their method of harvesting, that they do not bind the grain into sheaves, but deposit it in loose heaps on the ground, where it remains several weeks, after which it is threshed in the field. Our muleteers informed us that this is the method of harvesting practiced among all the Koords.

For two days, we had occasionally caught glimpses of the river Zab, and were not many miles distant from it, where it bursts down upon the plain from the high mountain-range, and still nearer to it, at the ferry of Kandeel; but taking the lower route to Mosul, and the Zab bending to the West-ward, we did not reach its banks till this morning. Now, the venerable river rolled before us. It is still crossed by floats or rafts, buoyed up by inflated skins, just as it was in ancient times. We crossed it at the Koordish village of Girdamamish.

The river here, at this season, is at least half as broad as the Connecticut is in Massachusetts, and with its powerful current is probably more than half as full. In summer and autumn, however, it is sometimes so low as to be fordable at this place.

The float at this ferry is eight or nine feet square, consisting of sticks, two or three inches in diameter, bound to each other in the form of a quadrangular frame, with one or

two sticks of similar size running cross-wise, upon which small sticks placed closely together, are lashed by means of **withes**, bark, or wild vines. It was buoyed up by twenty-one inflated sheep or goat skins, arranged compactly under its entire bottom. The float thus rigged is very frail in appearance, but is nevertheless capable of carrying across ten or twelve men at a time. It was borne rapidly down the stream more than half a mile, in crossing, and had then to be dragged up by the ferrymen, who waded in the river, one pushing behind and another pulling before, twice the distance of its descent down the stream, that in recrossing, it might strike the point from which it started.

The ferrymen guide the float by a species of oar, consisting of sticks four or five feet long, with several split reeds bound on one end of the sticks, and thus forming a surface six or eight inches square. They do not, however, trust much to these rude oars for propelling the float, but let it sweep down the current, doing little more than keep it from running in the wrong direction. Truly venerable is this method of crossing, as well as the river itself! Our horses swam the river, being floated down the stream, like our selves, more than half a mile. The effort was very great, and very reluctantly undertaken on their part, some of them returning repeatedly to the shore, and being as often forced back again into the stream.

The Koords here and in some other places, seeing me take notes, remarked, "This country originally belonged to the Franks, and it is theirs now, and he is writing it down." Our Nestorians, also, tell us that the impression is common among the Koords, that all their country once belonged to Europeans, who will ere long again become its possessors. The Koords here, however, were so little troubled by such apprehensions that they wished me to immortalize them by recording their names; and I must at least comply with the request of the chief speaker among them, named Bakhir, who was the proprietor of the float on which we crossed, and who, according to his statement, had himself been a great traveller, having seen Bagdad, Bushire, and Muscat.

We were detained several hours at the ferry, and by the time our effects and those of the caravan were over, the weather had become so intensely hot that we feared to ride in the sun, and pitching our tents on the north-western bank of the Zab, waited for the cool of evening. Not a tree was any longer to be seen, and the atmosphere felt truly like that of a desert.

In crossing the Zab, we passed from the Koordish province of Ravandooz into that of Amadiyah. The former is called by the natives Sooran, and the latter, Badeena. The same river here also separates between the pashaliks of Bagdad and Mosul, Ravandoos lying in the former, and Amadiyah in the latter.

It would be interesting to know just where Xenophon and his companions crossed the Zabatus, when pursued by Mithridates, with his horse, archers and slingers; but we have no record by which that point can be fixed with certainty. It was probably below us, as the Tigris is mentioned as near them on the left, a little before they reached the Zab. The river is stated by Xenophon to be found hundred feet wide. [See *Anabasis*, Book ii, Chapters 4,5; and B,iii. Chapter 3.] It must have been low at that time, judging from the width of the stream where we crossed it, which we thought to be seven hundred feet. No bridges now exist on the Zab, after it leaves the mountains; nor could they be supported, so powerful is the current when swollen, and so easily, on these alluvial plains, are its shores washed away.

Our thoughts naturally dwelt on sacred as well as classic themes, in this venerable region; and as we sat down under our tents, on the banks of the Zab, toward evening, we remembered the plaintive strain of the captive Jews sitting by the rivers of Babylon.

Deacon Tamo read the one hundred and thirty-seventh Psalm, and artlessly reared, "the Koords of this region now often say to the Jews and Christians, 'sing us one of your songs, that we may see how they are,' and then they laugh at them." How vivid an illustration of that touching elegy!

Before quitting the Zab, I should state that the Koords call it Zay, the Nestorians, Zava, and the Arabs, Zab.

The Koords of this district are dressed like the Arabs, in thin, loose, white cotton garments, well adapted to the climate, and strongly contrasting with the thick, heavy cloaks, and corresponding under-garments, combining many gaudy colors, which are worn by the Koords in the higher regions.

Leaving the banks of the Zab at sun-set, we immediately rose from the vale through which it flows, upon an undulating sandstone plain, extremely fertile, the wheat and barley fields being very thrifty, and the grass on the intervening sections, of the rankest growth--as we could discern on the way-side, in the shades of evening. We rode three and a half hours, but our party soon became so oppressed with drowsiness that our horses took their own pace, and went very slowly. We did not probably advance ten miles in that time. At last Mar Yohannan peremptorily ordered the muleteers to stop, which they did, though with reluctance. We were on a fine grassy plot, affording excellent feed for the horses. We did not pitch our tents, but spread our beds upon the ground, and were all soon fast asleep. The last sounds that I heard were the howlings of a wolf within a short distance.