PEEP INTO TOORKISTHĀN.

CHAPTER I.

During the summer of 1840, the aspect of the political horizon in Affghanistān afforded but slight grounds for prognosticating the awful catastrophe which two short years after befel the British arms. Dost Mahommed had not yet given himself up, but was a fugitive, and detained by the King of Bokhara, while many of the principal Sirdars had already tendered their allegiance to Shah Sooja:

* A portion of the following pages in their original form has appeared in the Asiatic Journal.
and there was in truth some foundation for the boast that an Englishman might travel in safety from one end of Affghanistān to the other. An efficient force of tried soldiers occupied Ghuzni, Cabul, Candahar, Jellalabad, and the other strongholds of the country; our outposts were pushed to the north-west some fifty miles beyond Bamecān, the Khyber and Bolun passes were open, and to the superficial observer all was tranquil. The elements of strife indeed existed, but at the time when I took the ramble which these pages attempt to describe, British power was paramount, and the rumour was already rife of the speedy diminution of the force which supported it.

Notwithstanding the modern rage for exploration, but few of our countrymen have hitherto pierced the stupendous barrier of the Paropamisan range; but the works of Hanway, Forster, Moorcroft, and Trebeck, Masson, and Sir Alexander Burnes, convey most valuable information concerning the wild regions through which they travelled, and I am bound in simple honesty to confess that my little book does not aspire to rank with publications of
such standard merit. An author's apology, however humble and sincere, is seldom attended to and more rarely accepted. Surely I am not wrong in assuming that a feeling of mournful interest will pervade the bosom of those who have the patience to follow my perhaps over-minute description of places whose names may be already familiar to them as connected with the career of those bold spirits who in life devoted their energies to the good of their country and the advancement of science, and who in the hour of disaster, when every hope was dead, met their fate with the unflinching gallantry of soldiers and the patient resignation of Christians.

My lamented friend, Lieutenant Sturt, of the Bengal Engineers, was one of the foremost of those who endeavoured, during the critical situation of the Cabul force previous to its annihilation, to rally the drooping spirits of the soldiers; and without wishing in any way to reflect on others, it may fairly be said that his scientific attainments and personal exertions contributed not a little to those partial successes, which to the sanguine seemed for
a moment to restore the favourable aspect of our military position. But I forbear from now dwelling upon these circumstances, lest I might undesignedly give pain to those who still survive the fatal event, merely stating my humble opinion that the memory of any mistake committed, either in a political or military light, will by the noble-minded be drowned in sorrow for the sufferings and death of so many thousands of brave men.

In the month of June, 1840, Lieutenant Sturt was ordered to survey the passes of the Hindoo Koosh, and I obtained leave from my regiment, then in camp at Cabul, for the purpose of accompanying him; my object was simply to seek pleasant adventures; the "cacoethes ambulandi" was strong upon me, and I thirsted to visit the capital of ancient Bactria; the circumstances which prevented our reaching Balkh will hereafter be detailed, but the main object of the expedition was attained, as Sturt executed an excellent map of the passes alluded to, and satisfactorily demonstrated that almost all the defiles of this vast chain, or rather group of mountains, may be turned, and that it would require
a large and active well-disciplined force to defend the principal ones. I have made every possible inquiry as to the fate of the results of Sturt's labours, but fear that they too were lost in the dreadful retreat. Whatever still exists must be in the Quarter-Master General's Department in India, far out of my reach, so that I am obliged again to request the indulgence of my reader for the want of a proper map on which he might, if he felt so inclined, trace our daily progress,* and to crave his forgiveness if I occasionally repeat what has been far more ably related by Moorcroft and the other authors whom I have already mentioned.

To the traveller whose experience of mountain scenery is confined to Switzerland, the bold rocks and rich though narrow valleys of the frontiers of Toorkisthān offer all the charms of novelty; the lower ranges of hills are gloomy and shrubless, contrasting strikingly with the dazzling, yet distant splendour of the snowy mountains. It is an extra-

* Since receiving the proof sheets for correction I have been kindly supplied by my friend Major Wade with a map taken principally from the one executed by the late Lieutenant Sturt.
ordinary fact, that throughout the whole extent of country occupied by these under features, which presents every variety of form and geological structure, there are scarcely any hills bearing trees or even shrubs; every valley, however, is intersected by its native stream, which in winter pursues its headlong course with all the impetuosity of a mountain torrent, but in the summer season glides calmly along as in our native meadows.

The multitude and variety of well-preserved fossils which are imbedded in the different strata of the Toorkisthān hills would amply reward the researches of the Geologist, and to the Numismatologist this portion of Asia proves eminently interesting, Balkh and other localities in its vicinity abounding in ancient coins, gems, and other relics of former days; and I much regret that I was unable to reach the field from whence I expected to gather so rich a harvest.
CHAPTER II.

In accordance with the golden rule of restricting our baggage to the least possible weight and compass, we allowed ourselves but one pony a piece for our necessaries, in addition to what were required for our small tent and cooking utensils, Sturt’s surveying instruments being all carried by Affghān porters whom he hired at Cabul for that purpose.

On the 13th of June we commenced our ramble, intending to proceed to Balkh by the road through Bameēān, as we should then have to traverse the principal passes of the Hindoo Khosh, and our route would be that most likely to be selected by an army either advancing from Bokhārā on Cabul or moving in the opposite direction. The plundering propensities of the peasantry rendered an escort
absolutely necessary, and ours consisted of thirty Afghans belonging to one of Shah Soojah's regiments, under the command of Captain Hopkins. As Government took this opportunity of sending a lac of rupees for the use of the native troop of Horse-Artillery stationed at Bameean, our military force was much increased by the treasure-guard of eighty Sipahis and some remount horses; so that altogether we considered our appearance quite imposing enough to secure us from any insult from the predatory tribes through whose haunts we proposed travelling. Our first day's march was merely to make a fair start, for we encamped two miles north-west of the city in a grove of mulberry-trees, and the wind, as usual in summer, blowing strong in the day-time, laid the produce at our feet; so that by merely stretching out our hands, we picked up the fruit in abundance; for although the sun was powerful, we preferred the open air under the deep foliage to the closeness of a tent. During the early part of the night an alarm was raised throughout our small camp, and as we knew the vicinity of Cabul to be infested with the most persevering
thieves, we naturally enough attributed the disturbance to their unwelcome visit, but it turned out to be only one of the remount horses, which having broken away from his picket was scampering furiously round our tents, knocking over the chairs, tables, and boxes which had been placed in readiness for packing outside the tent door. The neighing of the other horses, and their struggles to get loose and have a fight with their more fortunate companion, added to the braying of donkeys, barking of dogs, and groaning of the camels, gave me the notion of a menagerie in a state of insurrection. The affair looked serious when the animal began to caper amongst Sturt's instruments, but luckily we secured him before any damage was done, though for some time theodolites, sextants, artificial horizons, telescopes, and compasses were in imminent danger. The worst of an occurrence of this kind is, that your servants once disturbed never think of returning to rest when quiet is restored, but sit up for the remainder of the night, chatting over the event with such warmth and animation, as effectually
to keep their master awake as well as each other. We started next morning at four, and marched about six miles and a half, the distances being always measured with a perambulator, the superintending of which gave Sturt considerable trouble, as it was necessary to have an eye perpetually on the men who guided it, lest they should have recourse to the usual practice of carrying the machine, whenever the nature of the ground made that mode of transportation more convenient than wheeling. This, together with taking bearings, and the other details of surveying, gave my companion plenty of occupation, not only during the march, but for the rest of the day when halted.

We were now encamped close to a village called Kulla Kazec, a place of no very good repute as regarding honesty; indeed, we were well aware of the predatory propensities of our neighbours; but we seemed destined to experience more annoyance from the great apprehension of being attacked which existed amongst our followers, than from any well-founded anticipation of it; their fears were not
totally groundless, as it must be confessed that to a needy and disorganized population the bait of a lac of rupees was very tempting.

We had chosen a picturesque little garden for our resting place, the treasure and remount horses with the Sipahi guard being encamped about half a mile off to our rear. At about eleven at night the European sergeant in charge of the horses burst into our tent in some consternation, stating that a large band of robbers were descending from the adjacent hills to attack the treasure. Sturt immediately jumped up, and mounting his horse galloped off to the supposed scene of action. All was quiet without the camp; within there was a terrible bustle, which Sturt at last succeeded in allaying by sending out patrols in various direction, who reported that nothing could be either heard or seen of the dreaded robbers. Being rather averse to these nocturnal diversions, especially as they promised to be of frequent occurrence, I made careful inquiries to ascertain if there were any real foundation for the alarm, but all I could learn was, that the neighbourhood had always been noted for
robbers, who hasten towards the point upon the report of any party worth plundering passing near any of their forts. Possibly some robbers had gained intelligence of our treasure, and had actually appeared on the hills, but on discovering the strength of our party had retired.

The next day our route lay through delicious fields of ripening clover, in such profusion that the air was impregnated with its agreeable perfume, to a small fort called Oorghundee, remarkable chiefly for being the head-quarters of the oft-mentioned thieves, of whom I darcsay the reader is as tired as we were after the mere dread they inspired had caused us to pass two sleepless nights. But we were now determined to assume a high tone, and summoning the chief of the fort, or, in other words, the biggest villain, into our presence, we declared that in the event of our losing a single article of our property or being annoyed by a night attack, we would retaliate in the morning by cutting the surrounding crops and setting fire to the fort!

The military reader, especially if conversant with
some of the peculiarities of eastern discipline, will question how far we should have been justified in carrying our threats into execution. I can assure him we had no such intention; but be that as it may, our threats had the desired effect, and at length we enjoyed an uninterrupted night's rest.

On the morning of the 16th we proceeded to Kotcah Shroof, the whole distance being about ten miles: but the first three brought us to the extremity of the beautiful valley through which we had been travelling ever since we left Cabul. The aspect of the country in the immediate vicinity of our path has been well described by one of the most lamented victims to Afghan ingratitude and treachery. "If the reader can imagine," writes Sir Alexander Burnes, "a plain about twenty miles in circumference, laid out with gardens and fields in pleasing irregularity, intersected by three rivulets which wind through it by a serpentine course, and dotted with innumerable little forts and villages, he will have before him one of the meadows of Cabul." To complete the picture the reader must conceive the grey barren hills, which, contrasting
strongly with the fertility of the plains they encompass, are themselves overlooked by the eternal snows of the Indian Caucasus. To the English exile these valleys have another attraction, for in the hot plains of Hindoostan artificial grasses are rarely to be found, and the rich scent of luxuriant clover forcibly reminds the wanderer of the sweet-smelling fields of his native land.

But these pleasing associations were soon dispelled by the steep and rugged features of the pass through which we ascended on leaving the plain. It is called the Suffaed Kāk or White Earth, and we found by the barometer, that the gorge of the ravine was about a thousand feet above our last encamping ground. The hills on either side were ragged and abrupt, but of insignificant height: the length of the pass itself was about two miles, and from its head to Koteah Shroof the road was stony and difficult; but, as we had been careful at starting not to overload our baggage animals, they got through their work without being much distressed.
CHAPTER III.

I find it difficult to convey to the reader an adequate conception of the strange character of the hilly country we had now entered: no parts of Wales or even the varied groupings of the Swiss mountains offer a correct analogy. After passing the defile of the Suffrecd Kâk the hills recede to a distance of about two miles on either side of the road, and the whole space thus offered to the labours of the peasant is very highly cultivated; but the barren rocks soon hem in the narrow valley, and as you approach nearer and nearer you find your enchanting gardens transformed into a dreary and desolate defile,—this succession of small plots of fertile ground, alternating with short rugged passes, extends to Julrez, ten miles beyond Koteah
Shroof; which latter place is an insignificant fort, situated in the centre of one of the little green spots so pleasingly varying this part of the country.

At Koteah Shroof we gained the banks of the Cabul river, a placid flowing stream, and as the neighbourhood of our camp did not offer any features of peculiar interest, I determined to try my luck in fishing; but first I had to tax my ingenuity for implements, as I had neither rod, line, nor net. A willow stick and a bit of string was all I could command; and yet my primitive apparatus was very successful, for the fish also were primitive, affording me ample sport and taking the bait with extraordinary cagerness. My occupation attracted the attention of a few peasants who gathered round me, and stood wondering what potent charm attached to the string could entice the fish from their native element. I endeavoured to explain the marvel, but was utterly unsuccessful; indeed, the peasants did not accept my explanation, which they evidently considered as a fabrication invented to deceive them and conceal my supernatural powers. The inhabitants of these valleys seemed a simple
and inoffensive race, and, as in Europe, their respectful demeanour became more conspicuous as we increased our distance from the capital.

With regard to the state of cultivation of this valley—in which it resembles others generally throughout Afghanistan—wherever there is soil enough to hold the seed, the Afghan husbandman appears to make the most of it. We found here and there in profusion the pear, apple, cherry, mulberry, and luxuriant vine, and in some situations wheat, with an under-crop of clover.

On the 17th we proceeded to Julrez, a collection of wretched hovels of no interest, and on the 18th, after a march of ten miles through a succession of valleys and defiles, we reached the Kuzzilbash fort, Suffaed Kulla. About two miles before we arrived at our encamping ground we passed near the Sir-e-chusm or "fountain head," one of the sources of the Cabul river; it is a large pool stocked with a multitude of enormous fish that are held sacred by the few inhabitants of the adjoining hamlets, and which are daily fed by an aged fanatic, who for many years has devoted himself to their
protection. As it would be deemed in the highest degree sacrilegious to eat any of these monsters, they are never molested, and are so tame as to come readily to the hand when offered food. Of course, my necessary compliance with the prejudices of the guardian of the fish prevented the exercise of my Waltonian propensities.

A little further on is a remarkable bourj or watchtower isolated on a projecting rock, and supposed to have been built for the purpose of giving the chiefs of the little plain below, when at variance with the neighbouring mountaineers, notice of the approaching invader. At this point the valley is extremely narrow, being almost choked up with huge masses of rock hurled by the violence of some convulsion of nature from the sides of the impending precipices.

There are several minor forts in the vicinity of Suffaed Kulla, which is the largest, and is at present occupied by a Knuzzilbash chief, who took advantage a few years ago of the temporary absence of its rightful owner, and acting upon the principle of "might makes right," possessed himself forcibly
of it, and has held it ever since. He treated us with great kindness and attention, sending us most acceptable presents of fruit, with food for our followers and cattle.

We here experienced to a great degree that remarkable daily variation of temperature so peculiar to these regions: in the gully the wind was bleak and cold, but when encamped under the shelter of the fort the heat from the sun's rays reflected from the smooth surface of the bare rock was so intense that the thermometer rose to 100 of Fahrenheit. While in camp at Cabul I frequently experienced the same rapid change, for it would sometimes be a hard frost at day-break and an Indian summer heat at mid-day.

On the 19th of June we started very early, as the tremendous Oonnye pass rising to the height of 11,400 feet lay before us, and we had a full ten miles march ere we could reach our proposed halting place at the village of Uart. We soon entered the mouth of the pass, which was girt on either side by magnificent precipices; the road was narrow and slippery—of course without even an apology for
a parapet—running along a natural ledge on the verge of a perpendicular cliff, and so sheer was the side, that from a horse's back you might sometimes have dropped a stone into the apparently bottomless ravine—bottomless, for the rays of a noon-day sun have never broken the eternal darkness of the awful chasm beneath. Had horse, camel, or man missed their footing whilst scrambling up the steep and stony pathway, nothing could have saved them from being dashed to pieces. Frequently, when rounding some projecting crag, the small treasure-box fastened on the camel literally overhung the abyss, and I held my breath and the pulsations of my heart increased as I watched horse after horse and camel after camel weather the critical point.

Before we reached Uart a poor woman of the Huzareh tribe (the most persecuted and enslaved throughout these regions) came and complained to us that her child had been seized by a band of plunderers, as she supposed, to be sold into slavery. Sturt immediately despatched a couple of the guard to recover her child if possible, and the poor woman went off with the two soldiers in the full confidence
that her escort would be successful. I own that I myself was not so sanguine, but I had yet to learn how much even in these wild mountains the British name was respected. The mother's hopes were realized, and in the course of the day the child was recovered, having been instantly surrendered on the requisition being made; but I was surprised to see instead of a helpless child a fine handsome well-knit young man. The gratitude of the poor woman was sincere; she had nothing, she said, to offer in return, but prayed that every blessing might descend upon us and our most distant relations; that we might all become great kings; and that finally we might be successful in conquering the country we were proceeding to invade: vain were our endeavours to set before her in their true light the object of our expedition.

We arrived rather late at Uart after a hard day's work, and were not much gratified by the aspect of our camp, which was disagreeable, from its great elevation and its situation on a bleak table-land, thinly covered with a short grass, with the strong winds of the Hindoo Khoosh sweeping across it.
Here a young woman came to our tent asking permission to avail herself of our protection, as she was proceeding to the frontiers of Toorkisthān to purchase slave girls for the Cabul market. She accompanied us to Bameēān, and there remained. I heard afterwards that she did not succeed according to her anticipations, and that on her return to Cabul she died of fever. Our English ideas of slavery drawn from our knowledge of the varied sufferings endured by the thousands who are annually exported from the western shores of Africa, are opposite to those entretained in the east even by the victims themselves. The Asiatic and African slave are alike in name alone; the treatment of the latter in those parts of America where, spite of the progress of civilization and the advancement of true principles of philanthropy over the world, slavery is still tolerated and encouraged, has been too well and too often described for me to venture a word of my own opinion, but in Asia, in many cases, the loss of liberty is hardly felt.

The situation of the domestic slave of Egypt (though, strictly speaking, he must be classed under
the head of "African") is analogous to that observable generally in the east; and I form my opinion partly from an anecdote related to me by my friend Captain Westmacott, of the 37th Native Infantry, who was killed in the retreat from Cabul, which I will venture to repeat as an illustration. He was proceeding by the overland route from England to India, and remained some time in Egypt to view its splendid antiquities. On making inquiries with the object of procuring servants, he was informed that he had better purchase slaves. The civilized notions of my friend revolted at the idea, but he was assured that it was a method very generally adopted, as he would find it extremely difficult to hire servants, and if successful, they would prove the veriest rascals on the face of the earth. He reluctantly consented, and had them purchased. On his departure for India he summoned his slaves, and informed them that as they had behaved themselves well he would give them their freedom. They looked astounded and burst into tears, reminding him that instead of being kind to them he had shewn cruelty, "for where," said they, "shall
we go now? Who will have anything to say to us? We shall starve and die; but if your highness will sell us again, we shall be well fed and clothed.” I confess I do not see why the servants, if they really were so anxious to return to slavery, should not have sold themselves, and pocketed their own value. Throughout Afghanistān a slave is treated as an humble friend, and is generally found to be faithful and trustworthy.
CHAPTER IV.

After surmounting the Oonnye Pass, which is one of the principal defiles of the Hindoo Khoosh, we proceeded on the 20th to Gurdundewāl, a distance from Uart of about six and a half miles. The road was a gradual descent, and very rugged, leading along the bases of barren rocks, till we debouched upon the river Elbon, as it is termed by the natives, but the Helmund or Etymander of the ancients. Even here, where the stream was in its infancy, the current was so strong, that while we were fording it, one of our baggage ponies laden with a tent was carried away by its violence, and, but for the gallant exertions of our tent-pitcher, we should have had to sleep in the open air for the rest of our journey; as it fortunately happened, both animal
and load were recovered; and when properly dried, neither one nor the other were a bit the worse for their washing. On the 21st we encamped near the village of Kazee, after a march of nine miles along the right bank of the Helmund, which here flows in a south-westerly direction; we could procure no supplies whatever, either for man or beast, which was the more vexatious as we had a very hard day's work in prospect for the morrow, and were anxious to recruit ourselves and cattle before attempting it. We managed well enough in spite of our compulsory fast, and on the 22d we reached Kalloo, a distance of twelve miles, after crossing the steep and difficult pass of Hadjeckuk, 12,400 feet high; as we approached the summit we found ourselves amongst the snow, and experienced some little inconvenience from a difficulty of respiration; though this pass was even higher than that of Oonnye, it does not possess the same abruptness and boldness of feature which render the latter so interesting and dangerous. The hills near the gorge were so strongly impregnated with iron as sensibly to affect the needle of the theodolite.
Throughout this country, and especially amongst the Uzbegs, there is a fortified wall in the form of a square surrounding each village, with small bastions or towers at the angles. Plunder is so much the order of the day, or rather of the night, that, as a protection, the cattle and every living animal are shut up in these places at sunset; the wicket is locked and barred, and if the villagers happen to have a feud with any of their neighbours, which generally is the case, a watchman is stationed on each bastion. Truly of this land it may be said, that "what one sows another reaps," for frequently a chief forming a "chuppão" or plundering party against his neighbour, if unsuccessful in seizing men to sell for slaves or cattle for use, reaps and carries off the corn. These chuppãos are considered among the predatory tribes very exciting affairs, as affording opportunities for the young warriors to flesh their maiden swords; but it seldom happens that these encounters are very bloody, as, in the event of one party shewing a determined front, the other generally retreats. The unfortunate Huzareh tribe are constantly the sufferers, and the traveller
will recognize more slaves of that than of any other "clan."

We were now in the vicinity of the Koh-i-baba, a mountain whose granite peaks still towered six thousand feet above us, though our own camp was at least nine thousand above the level of the sea. We determined upon ascending it the following morning, but at first experienced considerable difficulty in procuring guides, not from the natives being either unqualified or unwilling to undertake the task, for they were chiefly hunters, and familiar with the paths they had themselves formed in pursuit of game, but they could not conceive why we should be anxious to climb the difficult height, and therefore were obstinately stupid in refusing to understand the purpose for which we required their services. At length we obtained a guide, and started next morning at half-past five: with considerable fatigue and some little risk we reached the summit after three hours walking, but the magnificent view amply rewarded us for our trouble. The peaks about us were capped with eternal snow; those below were rugged and black. The compa-
rison of the view from the top of a lofty mountain in a hilly country with that of the sea in a storm is old perhaps, but only the truer for that very reason. It was, indeed, as if the hand of God had suddenly arrested and turned to stone varied and fantastic forms of the dark tumultuous waves.

The solemn stillness of these lofty regions was a striking contrast with the busy plains below. The mountains abound in wild sheep, which the hardy hunter pursues for days together, taking with him a slender stock of food, and wrapping his blanket about him at night, when he seeks his resting-place amongst the crevices of these barren rocks. It is seldom that he returns empty-handed if he takes up a good position over-night, for the flocks of wild sheep descend from the least accessible parts at the earliest dawn in search of pasture, and one generally falls a victim to the unerring bullet of the rested Juzzyl. The distant view of the barrier range was beautiful beyond description, for, though the peak on which we stood was the highest for many miles around us, the lofty peaks of the Indian Caucasus were many thousand feet above us. We
were now beyond the range of the wild sheep, and not a living creature was to be seen save a majestic eagle, who, deeming us intruders where he was lord of all, sailed up along the sides of the precipitous ravines, sweeping about our heads as he soared upwards, then again wheeling downwards near and nearer, till at length I fancied him within range; but so deceptive was the distance or so defective my aim that he continued unruffled in his course, whilst the sharp crack of the rifle echoed and re-echoed from crag to crag. After satiating our gaze with these wild splendours of creation, a most unsentimental craving of the inward man warned us to descend, and we returned to Kalloo by eleven o’clock to do ample justice to our breakfasts.

We left Kalloo on the 24th, ascending by a rugged broken track to the highest point of the pass, where we came upon a fort surrounded by a small belt of cultivation divided into fields by hedgerows abounding with wild roses. I could hardly have imagined the road practicable for camels, but the cautious though unwieldy animals eventually suc-
ceeded in surmounting all difficulties, and arrived late at our encampment near a village called Topechee, the whole distance being ten miles and a half. From the crest of the pass to Topechee was a gradual descent, the road bordering a tremendous fissure, deep and gloomy, along the bottom of which a pelting torrent forced its way. The variegated strata on the mountain side, forming distinct lines of red, yellow, blue, and brown, were very remarkable, and I much regret that I had not time to devote to them most strict examination in a geological point of view.

On the 25th we started for Bameéän, passing by another Topechee a few miles further on, which is famous for its trout stream. Very few of these fish are found in the country, and only in the streams within a few miles of this spot. They are red-spotted and well-flavoured, and, as the natives do not indulge in the angler's art, they will rise at any kind of fly and gorge any bait offered. While halting a few minutes at lower Topechee we fell in with an Uzbeg warrior, a most formidable looking personage, armed, in addition to the usual weapons
of his country, with a huge bell-mouthed blunderbuss at least three inches in diameter; the individual himself was peaceably enough disposed, and, contrary to the usual habit of Asiatics, made no objections to our examining the small cannon he carried. On inspecting the deadly instrument we discovered it to be loaded to the very muzzle, a mixture of pebbles, slugs, and bits of iron being crammed into the barrel over a charge of a couple of ounces of powder. On our inquiring why it was so heavily charged, the man told us with much naïveté, that it was to kill nine men, illustrating the method by which this wholesale destruction was to be accomplished, by planting the butt on his hip and whirling the muzzle from right to left in a horizontal direction across us all, and telling us very pleasantly that if he were to fire we should all fall from the scattering of the different ingredients contained in the blunderbuss; had we not an instant before drawn the charge from which the fellow anticipated such dire effects, we might have felt rather uncomfortable at our relative positions; but I doubt whether the owner had ever had occasion
to try the efficacy of his boasted manœuvre, as he would probably at the first discharge have been killed himself either by the recoil or the bursting of the defective and honey-combed barrel.

The approach to Bameeân was very singular; the whole face of the hills on either hand was burrowed all over with caves like a huge rabbit-warren. I am informed that these caves are the work of nature, "yet worked, as it were planned," and are occupied occasionally by travellers both in summer and winter; they are observable in many places in Toorkisthān, and, when situated high up on the face of the hill, afford a safe retreat for the hunter. The road was tolerably good for the last three miles, running along a narrow valley sprinkled with numerous forts, which are generally occupied by the Huzareh tribes, an ill-featured but athletic race.

I shall not detain the reader by any description either of the wonderful ruins of the ancient city of Goolgoolla or of the gigantic images of Bameeân, these curiosities having been ably described in Masson's very interesting work; but I was a good deal amused by the various legends with which the
natives are familiar, of one of which, relating to a chalybeate spring in the neighbourhood called the "Dragon's Mouth," I shall take the liberty to offer a free version. It was related to me by an old gentleman who brought a few coins to sell, and I listened to him with some patience; but in proportion as the old fellow observed my passive attention did he increase in verbosity and pompous description. I still waited for the point of the story, but my friend, after exhausting his powers of speech and metaphor, was fain to wind up his tale with a most lame and impotent conclusion. I now give it to the reader, not from a wish to punish him as I was punished, but because from the prolixity of the narrator he necessarily most minutely described scenes and customs, which, though they had nothing on earth to do with the "Dragon's Mouth," may prove interesting to the reader, as illustrating the peculiarities of the people amongst whom we were now sojourning.
CHAPTER V.

"A TALE OF THE DRAGON'S MOUTH."

In the reign of Ameer Dost Mahommed Khān, when all the pomp and pride of glorious war was in its zenith at Čābul, there lived on the borders of Kūlloom and Kundooz, a chieftain named Khan Shereef, whose grandfather had accompanied the illustrious Nadir Shah from Persia in his expedition through Afgānīstān, and followed the fortunes of his royal master, even to the very gates of the imperial Delhi. On his return towards Persia, he had for a time intended to settle in Čābul, but "death, who assaults the walled fort of the chieftain as well as the defenceless hovel of the peasant," seized him for his own; the father also paid the debt of nature in the capital of Afgānīstān, but
not before the young Khan Shereef had seen the
light. Growing up to manhood and wearying of
the monotonous life a residence in Cābul entailed,
he pursued his way across the frontier mountains of
Toorkisthān, and arrived at the court of Meer
Moorad Beg. Here he performed good service in
the field, and becoming his master's personal friend
and favourite, had a fort and a small portion of
territory assigned to him. It was at the court of
the Kundooz ruler that he first became acquainted
with Zebah, the lovely rose of Cashmere, whom he
eventually purchased from her father for his wife.*
He started with his bride to take possession of his
newly-acquired gift, an insulated fortress in the
heart of a country abounding in those extensive
prairies for which Toorkisthān is so justly cele-
brated. On these magnificent savannahs he reared
the Toorkman steed, and soon boasted an unrivalled
stud.

* It is customary in this country as well as in other parts of
Asia to purchase the young women who may be selected for
wives of their relations, the purchase money varying according to
the degrees of beauty.
Towards the close of the first year he became a father, an event which was hailed with extravagant joy by all his vassals, the old retainers of his father foretelling the future achievements in the foray of the young Abdoollah Reheem.

A few months had scarcely elapsed, when the anxious mother spied an old crone moving about in the court-yard; their eyes happening to meet, Zebah screamed and fell into a swoon. The young heir was instantly hurried away, but not before the old hag had cast a withering glance on the boy's beautiful face; every one was now fully convinced that he had been struck by the "evil eye," which was but too clearly proved by the event, for from that day he sickened and pined away till reduced to a mere skeleton.

Large sums of money were expended by the fond parents in the endeavour to discover a charm to counteract the effects of the "evil eye," till at length in an auspicious moment it was proposed the boy should try the efficacy of the celebrated water of the "Dragon's Mouth," which is situated at the head of the enchanting vale of Bamecān,
just beyond the western limits of Toorkisthān. The slave girl who proposed this scheme related numerous and wonderful cures effected by the magic waters, and enumerated many hundred individuals, the lame, the blind, the infirm, the rheumatic, and those afflicted with bad temper, who had been perfectly cured by either drinking of the water or being immersed in the fountain itself. She would not be positive which mode was the best, but certain she was that the cure was perfect and permanent; she herself had been ugly and cross-tempered, and now she left her audience to judge of her character and appearance. This last proof at once determined the mother to adopt a plan, which after so many unsuccessful attempts she could not but consider as her last resource.

Khan Shereef was not quite so credulous, but what chance has a man alone against his united harem! He was so far influenced by the earnest entreaties of his disconsolate wife, that it was determined in three days he should with a strong cavalcade accompany his darling invalid to the charmed waters of Bameeān. The Toorkmān warriors were
too religious to doubt the fortunate results of the experiment, and accordingly for the few days which elapsed previous to the setting forth of the expedition the fort was a scene of active preparation. Armour was burnished, swords brightened and fresh ground, juzzyls cleaned and matches got ready, so that they might produce as imposing an effect as possible, not only on the presiding spirit of the fountain, and the very questionable friends through whose territories they were about to pass, but also that they might do due honour to their lord and master.

But before proceeding with my history, I must not omit a more minute description of Khan Shereef's fort. I have already described its locality on the borders of Toorkisthān. It was situated at the base of a low conical hill, on the summit of which a look-out tower had been erected; this building was in troublesome times occupied by a party of Juzzylchees, who took their station in it, and, fixing their cumbersome pieces on the parapet, watched the approach of any hostile party, and from their commanding and protected position would be enabled
to keep in check an enemy attempting to ascend the opposite side of the hill. As the nearest stream of water was full two miles from the fort, the present owner, being a man full of science and mathematical knowledge, had with unparalleled ingenuity sunk a deep and substantial well inside his walls, thus rendering his position infinitely more tenable than if his water-carriers had been daily obliged, as is the case in most places, to run the gauntlet of the enemy's fire whilst procuring the requisite supply of that indispensable article.

The fort itself was an oblong square, and required three hundred men to man its walls; it was built of mud, with a large bastion at each angle three and four stories high, and loopholed. It had but one gate, on which the nature of the defences afforded means for concentrating a heavy fire. Immediately facing the gate, and detached from buildings of inferior importance, was the Khan's own residence, and some low flat-roofed houses lining the inside of the whole extent of walls, which afforded a secure shelter to the vassals. The audience-chamber or public sitting-room was so
situated that the Khān could survey the whole of the interior of his fort whilst squatting on his Persian carpet or reclining on the large soft pillow, which is an indispensable luxury for a grandee of the rank and importance of Khān Shereef.

The sides of the apartment consisted of a lattice-work of wood reaching nearly to the ceiling, and connecting the mud pillars which supported the roof; the framework was richly carved, and on slides, so as to enable the owner to increase or diminish the quantity of light and air at his pleasure.

Between the Khān's dwelling and the gate was the mosque, whose minarets towered above the walls and bastions of the fort,—its dome was beautifully proportioned, and inlaid with agate, jasper, and carnelian, besides being wonderfully painted with representations of strange animals unknown to the common people, but which the Moollah affirmed were all taken from the life.

At this time the base of the mosque was occupied by a party of men smoking and passing the Kalecān to each other; amongst them was one, evidently superior to the rest in age and wisdom, for his
opinion was frequently appealed to by all and listened to with much deference. When not called upon to interfere he sat quiet and reserved, and to judge by his countenance was in a melancholy mood. His name was Rhejjub;—he was the oldest retainer of the family, and to him in all cases of emergency did the Khān apply for advice, which had never been given without due deliberation and almost prophetic foresight. He had only that morning been deputed to remain and guard the fort during the absence of his master, and although he knew it to be a post of honor and trust, yet he could not but consider it an effeminate duty to be left guardian of the Koch khanah or family, and superintendent of the unchosen of the band. With him, “to hear was to obey,” still he envied those who had been selected to accompany their lord. Old Rhejjub had been a great traveller in his day; had wandered over many portions of Arabia, and visited the holy city of Mecca; thus gaining the valuable privileges of a Suyud or holy man, which title alone was a passport and safeguard amongst even the lawless Ghilgyes
and Khyberrëes of Affghanistān, it being a greater crime for a man to kill a Suyud than even his own father. Thus, whenever a Chuppao or other war-like expedition was in contemplation, Rhejjub was invariably despatched to reconnoitre and obtain information, and being a man of a shrewd turn of mind, and calculating all chances during his homeward journey, was always prepared after detailing his news to give a sound opinion as to the best plan to be pursued.

At early dawn of the proposed day of departure the whole party were summoned by the Muezzin’s call to offer up prayers for their safe arrival at the “Dragon’s Mouth,” for the effectual cure of the young Abdoollah, and his happy return to his fond mother. Before mounting, was performed the ceremony of taking from its resting place the famous sword given to the Khān’s grandfather by Nādir Shah himself. The blade was of Damascus steel, and valued alone at one hundred tomauns;* the ivory handle was ornamented with precious stones, and the pommel was one large emerald of

* Tomaun, twenty rupees or about £2.
great beauty and value. The scabbard was of shagreen finely embroidered in gold. This precious weapon the Suyud had the enviable office of presenting to his chief unsheathed, whilst the aged Moollah who stood by read aloud the iniiald Arabic inscription on the blade, "May this always prove as true a friend to thee as it has been to the donor." The Khān received the valued heirloom with all due respect, and kissing the weapon sheathed and fixed it firmly to his belt.

All necessary preparations for the departure being now completed, the camel destined for the accommodation of the invalid was brought to the door of the palace, conducted by a favourite Arab who had for many years filled the office of head Surwan or camel-driver. The colour of the animal was almost white, and the large gold embroidered housings swept the ground, on either side was fixed a wicker-basket lined and covered with red cloth, and furnished with soft cushions; one of these held the young Khān, whilst the other was occupied by the nurse who was the original promoter of the expedition. At length the word to
march was given, and the escort consisting of sixty horsemen galloped forth. Khan Shereef himself was clad in a coat of mail, and wore a circular steel head-piece, in which were three receptacles for as many heron plumes; a light matchlock, the barrel of which, inlaid with gold, was slung across his shoulder; attached to his sword-belt were the usual priming and loading powder-flasks made of buffalo's hide, with tobacco-pouch and bullet-holder of Russia leather worked with gold thread; and the equipment was completed by the Afghān boots drawn up over the loose trousers reaching to the knee, with sharp-pointed heels serving for spurs.

The procession moved on. the escort forming an advance and rear-guard, the chief galloping sometimes in front of the party, and now walking his Toorkmān steed alongside the richly caparisoned camel with its precious burthen.

Occasionally a horseman would dash out from the ranks in chase of a wild goat or sheep crossing the little frequented road, or, dismounting and giving his horse in charge of a comrade, would make a detour on foot in the hope of getting a shot
at a chichore.* The tedious hours of march were thus wiled away till they reached the "Dundun Shikkun Kotul" or tooth-breaking pass, when the horsemen assumed a more steady demeanour. They were now within forty miles of the celebrated spring, which they hoped to reach on the following day.

The Dragon's Mouth is situated four or five miles to the north-west of Bamecān, high up in the mountains in the direction of the Yookaoolung country. After a toilsome and somewhat perilous ascent the traveller finds himself at the edge of a deep ravine—or rather fissure in the rock, for the width at the top is seldom more than twelve feet—the sides presenting a ferruginous appearance, with tints varying from extremely dark to lighter shades, by reason of the soil being so strongly impregnated with ore. The low gurgling of the wonder-working stream might be heard issuing from the depths of the dark abysm.

Below, and at the only point of feasible approach

* This is a species of partridge very abundant throughout Toorkistan.
for the disease-stricken, is a large cave, where the water bubbles up warm, and forming innumerable small whirlpools before it breaks again into a stream, and mingles its waters with those of a torrent below.

Here, at the base of a large fragment of rock, almost entirely covered with Arabic inscriptions and quotations from the Korān alluding to the healing powers of the well and the mercy of God, Khan Shereef and his now dismounted followers offered up prayers for success. Suddenly a huge mass of rock detaching itself from the mountain side thundered down the steep; it was hailed by all as a good omen, and the Moollah declaring that "now or never" was the auspicious moment, the child was taken from the arms of the now trembling nurse and immersed in the turbid waters. Hope elevated the breasts of the father and of the attendants, nor was that feeling fallacious, for on the following morning the invalid was pronounced decidedly better, and was again taken to the cavern, and again, with sanguine prayers and invocations, dipped into the pool.

Khan Shereef, feeling assured that he could now
do no more, and trusting to the goodness of Providence, ordered a retrograde movement, and in a few days arrived at his castle with the infant nearly restored to health. A few years after the young Abdoollah was a healthy active boy, indulging in the sports of the field, and anxiously awaiting the time when he should be of sufficient age to join in the more exciting scenes of the chuppao. The old nurse, the proposer of the successful scheme, was highly honoured, and became chief attendant in the seraglio, which office she holds to this day.

"And now," concluded the old gentleman, "if my lord will choose to purchase these beautiful coins, he shall have them for whatever price his generosity may think fit to put upon them."
CHAPTER VI.

The force stationed at Bamecān consisted, at the time we were there, of a troop of native horse artillery and a regiment of Goorkahs in the service of Shah Seujah.

On our arrival, Dr. Lord, the political agent, sent us a polite note of invitation to pitch our tents near his fort, and become his guests during our stay; we remained with him till the 29th, and were much gratified by his kind attention.

The quiet demeanour of the natives here was very remarkable, and as we can hardly attribute the circumstance to an inherent pacific disposition, we must the more appreciate the wonderful address displayed by the political agent in his dealings with the various parties, who in these remote mountains,
as well as in more civilised countries, are ever ready
to quarrel with each other, and only suspend their
animosity when a common powerful enemy is to be resisted or a helpless stranger to be plundered. As it was, we reaped considerable benefit from the favourable impression made on the peasants by the authorities, for we were enabled to go out shooting, alone, and even wander unarmed amongst the hills without experiencing the slightest insult or incivility.

Indeed, at the period of which I am writing, there seemed to have been a pause in the wild passions of the Affghāns throughout the country, which was perhaps one of the fatal causes which lulled us into that dangerous feeling of security, from whence we were awoke by the most dreadful disaster that has ever befallen the British arms. Poor Dr. Lord was killed at Purwan Durrah during the short campaign in the Kohistan under Sir Robert Sale; and the other British officer, Dr. Grant, who was the medical attaché to the mission, disappeared during the retreat from Charrikār in 1841, and has never been heard of since.
On the 29th June we left Bameeān for Surruk Durrah (red valley), which is situated at the mouth of the gorge; it is a place of no importance, but the face of the impending hills has a most extraordinary appearance from the fanciful shapes of the harder rocks which jut out from the clayey sides of the mountains.

Here it was that Colonel Dennie, of the 13th, who afterwards fell at Jellālabad, with a small force of a few hundred men, completely routed the Ex-Ameer Dost Mahommed Khān, who was accompanied by all the principal Uzbeg chiefs and the famous Meer Walli of Kulloom.

A report reached the gallant Colonel in the morning, that the enemy had taken up a position at the head of the Bameeān valley; he immediately ordered a reconnoitring party to proceed in that direction, for the purpose of ascertaining whether there was any foundation for the alarm, and accompanied them himself; he was rather astonished on perceiving the enemy debouching from the hills in great force; the odds were fearfully against him in numbers, but, like a good soldier, he at once decided
upon attacking without delay. He immediately opened a fire on them from his two guns, under the able superintendence of Lieut. McKenzie, and then dashing forward, drove them back with great slaughter into the narrow gorge, from whence they again attempted to advance, but were again beaten back, till at length they lost courage and broke away in every direction.

On the 30th we marched to Akrobād, a distance of ten miles. On leaving Surruk Durrah we entered the narrow gorge before alluded to; it is five miles long, and has precipitous sides, at the bottom of which rushed a foaming torrent: the formation of the hills was slate with a superstratum of limestone. On emerging from the Akrobād Pass, where there was not a breath to disturb the meagre foliage, we were suddenly surprized by a bleak piercing wind, which we were told invariably blew across the table land on which the fort is built. Although in the height of summer, the wind was intensely cold, and we were glad to take into wear the scanty supply of winter clothing which we had brought with us in case of emergency. Out of the stream
running in front of the fort in less than an hour I managed to take a few well-flavoured trout, which swallowed my bait most greedily. From Surruk Durrah to Akrobād the road was, comparatively speaking, good, it being under the superintendence of Lieut. Broadfoot, who had been directed to make it practicable for artillery as far as Syghan; he had made good progress in his work, and at the period I write of, it was a very fair military road as far as Akrobād. Poor Broadfoot was slain in the gallant and desperate charge made by the officers of the 2d Bengal Cavalry at Purwān Durrah, of which I hope in the proper place to be able to give the reader a slight description.

The hills about Akrobād are so situated as to form a funnel for all the winds of the snowy range, rendering the temperature of the little table-land bitterly cold both in summer and winter—so much so in winter, that the Huzāreh inhabitants desert the fort in autumn for some more sheltered locality, and return again with the spring.

We now entered Toorkisthān, the pass of Akrobād dividing it from Affghanistān. Should the
traveller form his opinion of the country beyond by the specimen now before us, he would be loth indeed to proceed, for a more dismal corner can hardly be conceived. The outline of the adjacent mountains was dreary and uninviting, with very little cultivation in the valley, which also bore a most desolate aspect—it was barren and unpromising, without participating in the wild and grand features which generally characterize these regions. Fuel was with difficulty procured, and our camp was but scantily furnished with even the most necessary supplies.
CHAPTER VII.

On the 1st of July we left this sad region, and pitched our tents some five miles further onwards, in a pleasant meadow, where we met a brother of Dost Mahommed, the well-known Sirdar Jubber Khan, who arrived in the course of the day from the interior of Toorkistan, and encamped close to us. He was then on his way to Cabul, having in charge the women and children belonging to the seraglio of the ex-king. He invited us to pay him a visit, which we did in uniform, and found him an agreeable old gentleman, with manners far more polished than the generality of his countrymen, who, though not deficient in a certain national savage grace, frequently shock our European notions of propriety by their open disregard of what we
are accustomed to consider the decencies of society; but Jubber Khān seemed to have all the good qualities and few of the vices so prevalent in the Affghān character. No doubt that superior polish of manner was derived from his more extensive intercourse with Europeans. During our visit he presented us each with a small silver Mahommedan coin, saying at the same time with peculiar grace and dignity that he was now a poor man, and entirely dependent on the generosity of the British; that the coin was of no intrinsic value, but still he hoped we would remember the donor. Much as we respected the character of our host, I could not but regret that he had not yet picked up the English habit of sitting on a chair; for what with tight pantaloons and a stiff uniform, I got so numbed by sitting cross-legged like a tailor, that when the interview was over I could not rise from my cramped position without assistance, much to the amusement of Jubber Khān, whose oriental gravity was entirely upset.

I was informed that on being requested by the British authorities to deliver up the family of his
brother, he boldly refused, stating that they were given into his charge, and that he deemed it a sacred trust not to be betrayed by any consideration of personal advantage. It will be gratifying to the reader to know that this manly refusal did not operate to his prejudice in the opinions of those to whom it was made. He subsequently obtained from the Dost permission to comply with the demand, and was now on his journey for that purpose; but though he professed to have every confidence in our honour and generous kindness with regard to the females, he appeared somewhat anxious as to the influence which his previous refusal might have with reference to his own treatment. Jubber Khān's name was in great repute amongst the Afghāns, who, all wild and savage as they are, still have sufficient feeling to admire in others those virtues which are so rarely met with amongst themselves: he is considered an able politician also, as well as the poor man's friend—high and low find him equally easy of access, and he is the general mediator in quarrels between the different chiefs, and the principal counsellor in the national debates.
Whilst encamped here the united seraglios of Dost Mahommed and Jubber Khān passed in front of our tents, on their way to Kābul. It was a very large procession, consisting of nearly eighty camel loads of fair ones of every age and quality. Each camel was furnished on either side with a large pannier, and in each pannier was a lady—weight against weight. The presence of Englishmen so much excited their curiosity that we were enabled to enjoy a nearer and better view of the beauties than strict decorum would have justified, and it may not perhaps be uninteresting to my fair readers, if, turning to advantage this slight impropriety, I here take the liberty of describing as much as I could observe of the very remarkable travelling costume of the female Afsān aristocracy. When in public the highborn Afsān lady is so completely enveloped by her large veil (literally sheet), that the person is entirely concealed from head to foot; there are two eyelet holes in that part of the sheet which covers the face, admitting air and light, and affording to the fair one, herself unseen, a tolerable view of external objects. I
trust I may be permitted without indiscretion to remove this shroud and give some slight description of the costume.

Over a short white under-garment, whose name of Kammese* sufficiently denotes its use, is a Peirān or jacket, which amongst the higher classes is made of Bokhāra cloth, or not unfrequently of Russian broad cloth, brought overland through Bokhāra. This garment is generally of some glaring gaudy colour, red or bright yellow, richly embroidered either in silk or gold; it is very like the Turkish jacket, but the inner side of the sleeve is open, and merely confined at the wrist with hooks and eyes. A pair of loose trousers, gathered at the waist with a running silken cord, and large at the ankle, forms a prominent feature in the costume, and is made either of calico, shawl-cloth,

* Anglice, Chemise. It may fairly be inferred that the name of this under-garment is derived from the word mentioned in the text; and doubtless there are many words in our own as well as in other modern languages that may equally be traced to Asia; for instance, Sheittan, Satan.
or Cachmere brocade, according to the finances of the wearer. Instead of stockings they wear a kind of awkward-looking linen bag, yellow or red, soled with thick cloth or felt, the top being edged with shawl-cloth. The shoes are similar to the Turkish slipper, with the usual Asfghān high-pointed heels tipped with iron; and as these articles must from their shape be an impediment to walking, I presume that the real use to which they are generally put must have given rise to the common expression in Hindoostān for any punishment inflicted, the term being “jutte mar,” literally, beating with the shoe. The weapon put to this purpose would be very formidable, and I have little doubt that the beauties of the harem keep their lords in high discipline by merely threatening with such an instrument.

On the head of the Asfghān female is worn a small skull cap, keeping in place the hair in front, which is parted, laid flat, and stiffened with gum, while the rest hangs in long plaits down the back.

Next day we left for Syghān, and after a march of about fifteen miles pitched our tents in the vicinity of the principal fort. The whole journey
was through a deep defile, except about half-way, when we came upon a small but well cultivated plain, with a fort in the centre. The contrast was pleasing after travelling so many miles amidst the dark overhanging crags, threatening destruction on the passer-by; but this relief was of short duration, for after two miles it gradually contracted, and formed a continuation of the defile down to the valley of Syghān.

The fort is on a small hill detached from the main range, but easily commanded, though it is said for ages to have been deemed impregnable, till some chief more knowing than his neighbours hit upon the very obvious expedient of lining the overhanging range with Juzzylchees, and picking off every individual who ventured to appear on the battlements. It is now in our possession, and occupied by two companies of Sepoys; and though the place might be seriously annoyed by musketry from the adjacent hills, still the sides of those hills are so rocky and precipitous that cannon could not be brought to bear from the summit without immense labour.
These hills are composed of sandstone and indurated clay, in which numerous fossils abound.

The valley along which we proceeded produces many varieties of fruit, and is rich in the cultivation of artificial grasses, lucerne being the most abundant.

On arriving at our encamping ground on the 3rd of July, about four miles and a half beyond Syghān, a poor villager, a vassal of Mahommed Ali Beg's, to whom the fort of Syghān belonged previous to its cession to the British, came to complain that some of our baggage animals had injured one of his fields by trampling down his grain. Upon enquiry his story was found to be correct. Mahommed Ali Beg happened to be paying us a visit when the man presented himself, and wished to drive the poor fellow away to prevent his troubling us; and great indeed was the wonder and astonishment shewn by all the natives about us when Sturt desired that the peasant should receive ten rupees as compensation for the damage done to his crops.

Loud were the praises bestowed upon our extra-
ordinary justice; and Mahommed Ali Beg, forgetting the line of conduct he had but a moment before advocated, delivered the following expression of his reformed opinion in a loud pompous tone, whilst his followers listened, open-mouthed, to the eloquence of their now scrupulous chief: "Although the Feringhis have invaded our country they never commit any act of injustice;" then, having delivered himself of this inconsistent speech, he lifted a straw from the ground, and turning round to his audience, continued: "they don't rob us even of the value of that; they pay for every thing, even for the damage done by their followers." Corporal Trim's hat falling to the ground was nothing to the effect produced by the comparison of the straw; but, alas for human nature! I had but too strong grounds for suspecting that, of the ten rupees awarded to the peasant, seven were claimed by Ali for having induced the Feringhis to listen to the claim!!

The surrounding hills have here as at Surruk Durrah the appearance of ruined castles, with donjon or keep and tower; they forcibly reminded
me of the "Castle of St. John," in Scott's Bridal of Triermain, but my visions of Merlin and fair maidens awoken from their charmed slumbers were destroyed by the sight of a little purling brook which promised me a few hours angling. Nor was I disappointed; for in a short time I (being unprovided with my fishing basket) filled two towels full of fish, and congratulated myself on my sport; however, to use an old phrase, "the proof of the pudding is in the eating," and so we found it, for when brought to table "my catch" fell far short of our epicurean anticipations, and I almost regretted that I had not continued my dreams instead of disturbing the finny tribe.

A complaint was made to us in the course of the day, that an Huzareh female, returning to her own country with one attendant, had been seized and carried away to one of the adjacent forts, where she was detained; and our interference was requested with a view to obtaining her release. We were of course most anxious to help the poor woman, especially as it appeared from what was reported to us that there were not the slightest grounds for the
outrage, beyond the helplessness of her situation and the natural cupidity of the robber chief of the fort; but, unfortunately, we were travelling without credentials, the Envoy having declined to furnish us, lest the inhabitants should fancy that we were vested with any political power; and therefore we could not interfere, and what became of her I know not, though we were afterwards told that on her resigning her trinkets as her ransom she would be released. Indeed the personal ornaments of the petty chiefs are generally the point of some lawless proceeding like the one alluded to, as they are seldom possessed of sufficient capital in specie to purchase jewels, but exchange their grain and fruits for clothes and precious stones. I have mentioned the above circumstance to give the reader some notion of the lawless state of society, deeming it out of keeping with the humble character of this simple narrative, and perhaps beyond the ability of the writer, to enter more minutely into the various causes which have contributed to bring the country into so unhappy a state.
CHAPTER VIII.

On the 4th July our route lay across the Dundun Shikkun Kotul, or "tooth-breaking pass," and a truly formidable one it is for beasts of burden, especially the declivity on the northern side. Very few venture upon the descent without dismounting, for the surface of the rock is so smooth and slippery, that the animals can with difficulty keep their legs even when led, and many teeth, both of man and horse, have been broken before reaching the bottom.

The valley of Kāmmurd lying at the foot of the northern side of the pass has a very fertile appearance, and orchards of different descriptions of fruit-trees are interspersed throughout the cultivation. The fort of the principal chief, named Uzzuttoollah
Beg, from whom we received a visit, is high up the valley, and there are two others of minor importance on either bank of the river, lower down and together.

Uzzuttoollah Beg was in appearance a very fine old man with an imposing white beard; he was six feet high, large boned and muscular, and by far the most powerful and stately looking personage we had hitherto met; but he was a shrewd wicked old fellow, and when the star of British prosperity began to wane, proved himself a dangerous enemy. His own vassals, from whom he exacted the strictest obedience, stood in great awe of him. He came merely, he said, to pay his respects, to chat over political affairs, and to inquire from us whether the English intended giving up his valley to the Meer Walli of Koollum. We could give him no information as to the intentions of Government. "Khoob " (well,) answered he, "if such really be the case, "the Meer Walli may seize me if he is able, pro-
vided you keep aloof; the Meer has tried that "game before now, but did not succeed; on two "separate occasions he has visited my fort in an
"unceremonious manner, and with hostile intent; "but, gentlemen, there are two sides to a fort, the "inside and the out. I was in—the Meer was out, "and I kept him there; till, (suffering no other in- "convenience myself than the deprivation from "riding for a few days,) by keeping up a constant "fire on his ragamuffins, I one fine day compelled "him to beat his retreat:" and so saying, he stroked his beard with much complacency, evidently con- sidering it and its owner the two greatest wonders of the Toorkisthān world.

It may be as well to remark here, that in these valleys as throughout Affghanistān in general, the forts are made of mud, the walls being of great strength and thickness; they are built gradually, and it takes many months to erect a wall twenty feet high, as each layer of mud is allowed to bake and harden in the sun before the next is superim- posed. Now, as none of the chiefs possess cannon, except the Meer Walli and Moorad Beg of Koon- dooz, it is almost impossible to gain an entry into a well-constructed fort, except by treachery; and even the few honey-combed pieces of small calibre
possessed by the above chieftains would not have much effect against the massive ramparts.

But the Uzbegs have a method of undermining the bastion, by turning the course of some convenient stream right under the very base; this gradually softens the lower stratum of mud, and diminishing its tenacity, the whole fabric comes tumbling down from its own weight. They also have frequently recourse to mining, but for either method to succeed the defenders cannot be on the alert.

A man who had been engaged in an operation of the latter kind, by which the fort of Badjghār was once taken, explained to me the plan adopted, which bears a rude analogy to the modern plan of mining under the glacis to the foot of the counterscarp.

To-day a horseman came into our camp at about 3 p.m. with letters from Bameeān; he had left early in the morning, and thus accomplished a journey of fifty miles with the same horse, over two severe passes, and through a succession of difficult defiles. On alighting, he tied his horse to the branch of a tree, merely loosening the girths, but
not intending to give him food till the evening. The horses are habituated to the want of any midday feeding, and at night and morning seldom get grain. But the dried lucerne and other artificial grasses with which they are supplied must afford them sufficient nourishment, as they are generally in very good working condition; they are undersized, but very sure-footed; it is indeed astonishing over what fearful ground they will carry their riders. The yabboo is a different style of animal, heavier built and slower; its pace is an amble, by means of which it will get over an immense distance, but it is not so sure-footed.

I remarked that aged horses were very rarely met with, and on inquiring the reason, was informed that the horses were all so violently worked when young as soon to break down, after which they are slaughtered and made into kabobs. I was assured that the eating-shops of Cabul and Kandahār always require a great supply of horseflesh, which is much liked by the natives, and when well seasoned with spices is not to be distinguished from other animal food.
At this station fruit was in great profusion; I observed that the sides of a barren hill near our camp were of a bright yellow tint for upwards of a mile and a half, and on approaching to discover the cause, I found the whole space covered with apricots placed side by side to dry in the sun. I tasted some of them, which had apparently only just been gathered, and found them very well flavoured, though generally speaking I must allow that the fruits of these valleys are inferior to those of Europe, with the exception of the grape, which is unequalled. But the grape and apricot are not the only fruits which flourish in this green spot surrounded by barren rocks,—the walnut, the peach, mulberry, apple, and cherry, also come to perfection in their respective seasons.

At sunset Uzzuttoollah Beg sent us a plentiful supply of fruit, grain for our cattle, and flour for the servants, regretting at the same time that he was not able to send us sheep enough for the whole party. When he came to take leave, we told him we had received more than we expected or required, and begged his acceptance of a loonghee or head-
dress in remembrance of us. He was much gratified with the trifle, it being of Peshawurree muslin, a kind much sought after and prized by the Uzbegs. He immediately took off his own turban, which was indeed rather the worse for wear, and binding the new one round his head, declared with a self-satisfied look, that “it would be exceedingly becoming.” He then arose, and probably to shew his knowledge of European breeding, gave me such a manly shake of the hand as made me expect to see the blood start from the tips of my fingers. I am not sure, with all due respect for the good old custom of shaking hands, that I should not have preferred submitting to the Uzbek mode of salutation. On approaching an equal, the arms of both are thrown transversely across the shoulders and body, like the preparatory attitude of wrestlers in some parts of England, then, placing breast to breast, the usual form of "salaam aleikoom" is given in a slow measured tone. But on horseback the inferior dismounts, and, according to the degree of rank, touches or embraces the stirrup.

The valley of Kammurd is of an oblong form
flanked by stupendous mountains; the enormous barrier of the Dundun Shikkun almost precludes the possibility of bringing cannon from the south, although one gun is known to have been dragged over by sheer manual labour; it was brought by Dost Mahommed from Cabul to quell some refractory chiefs, the carriage being taken to pieces, and the gun fastened by ropes in the hollowed trunk of a tree.

On the 5th of July we reached Piedbāgh, five miles further down the valley, which gradually decreased in breadth, seldom exceeding two hundred yards, and sometimes contracting to fifty. Along the banks of a muddy river flowing through the centre of the narrow vale, the sycamore tree was very luxuriant, and two or three forts formed a chain of communication from one end of the cultivated land to the other. Piedbāgh, as its name implies, is a complete orchard, piedan meaning perpetual, and bāgh, garden; from a distance it looks like a thick wood with the turrets of the forts over-topping the dark foliage. We took advantage of the quiet beauty of this spot to give our horses a
day's rest, and lucky it was for us we had at Bameeān exchanged for stout yaboos the unwieldy camels which we had brought from Cabul; the yaboos get over the ground twice as fast as the camel, and for mountainous districts are infinitely preferable to the "ship of the desert."

It was lucky also that we had not burdened ourselves with bedsteads or charpoys, as they are called in the East (literally "four feet"); they would have inconvenienced us much; and we should, probably, have been forced to abandon them on the road, the pathways along the glens being often so narrow, and so encumbered with the detritus from the overhanging mountains, as to make it necessary to pack our baggage very compactly; inattention to this important point in mountain travelling is sometimes followed by very serious consequences, for the chair or bedstead, projecting far beyond the centre of gravity of the unfortunate animal, catches against a corner of rock, and both load and pony run imminent risk of being hurled into the abyss below. We were now so inured to sleeping on the ground, that had it not been for the multitudes of fleas we
should never have felt the want of a more elevated sleeping place. The animal and vegetable character of Piedbāgh may be stated in a few words—apricots and fleas are in abundance, the former very large sized, and the latter healthy.

In the course of my journal I hope to be able to relate the circumstances of a very pretty little affair which occurred here, some months after we passed through, between two companies of Shah Soojah’s Goorkah regiment and the inhabitants of the neighbouring forts. The Goorkahs, upholding their well-known character, fought desperately against an overwhelming force; they would have suffered severely but for the able conduct of their leader, who was an European non-commissioned officer and quarter-master serjeant of the corps; his manœuvring would have done credit to many an older soldier.

On the 7th July we quitted Piedbāgh for Badjghār, the most westerly of our advanced posts; it was occupied at the period of which I write by Captain Hay, and was the head-quarters of the Goorkah battalion. The hills from a little above
Piedbāgh encroach so much upon the valley as to reduce it to little more than a ravine forming two gigantic walls, that on the right being inaccessible save to the wild goat, whilst the left-hand boundary, though still precipitous, may be surmounted by active light-armed troops. On emerging from the orchards we came upon a grass meadow extending to the fort of Badjghār, which is again situate at the mouth of a defile leading to Māther, the route we eventually pursued. The fort is capable of containing about two hundred men; when first taken possession of it was literally choked with filth and abominations of all kinds, but the industry of the little garrison had succeeded in giving it an air of cleanliness and comfort. As a military position it is most faulty, and it is really astonishing to conceive how heedless those who fixed upon it as a post of such importance must have been of the manifold weakness of the place; from the surrounding heights it has the appearance of being situated in a deep dyke; it is completely hemmed in, and juzzaelmen occupying the adjacent hills could easily find cover from whence they might
pour in so destructive a fire as to render the place untenable. In addition to these defects, the fort of Badjghār is unprovided with a well within its defences; this, as has before been remarked, is a common case, but still it would materially affect the integrity of a force within, as they would be reduced to the necessity of frequent sallies to the neighbouring stream to obtain water.

We found Capt. Hay in no enviable position; he had but one European to assist him in his various important duties; the three or four officers who were nominally attached to the corps being either on detachment or other military employ, so that with such slender aid as one European sergeant, it was very hard work for him to keep up discipline amongst a brave but half-savage band, to provide for their subsistence, keep a sharp look-out on his front and flanks, and remain on good terms with the neighbouring chiefs, whose conflicting interests, lawless propensities, and savage nature were continually requiring his mediation or interference. "Quem deus vult perdere prius dementat" is an old saw most applicable to the conduct, or rather want
of conduct of the "powers that were" during the spring of 1841, and the state of the important out-
post of Badjghahr is a type of the condition of most of the detached posts throughout the kingdom of
Cabul; the dreadful catastrophe which ushered in the year 1842 is but too unanswerable a proof of
the opinion I here express; and though innumerable instances of individual gallantry as well amongst
the unlettered privates as the superior officers have thrown a halo round their bloody graves, the stern
truth still forces itself upon us, that the temporary eclipse of British glory was not the consequences
of events beyond the power of human wisdom to foresee or ward off, but the natural results of an
overweening confidence in our power, and of an infatuated blindness to the sure indications of the
coming storm which for many months before it burst darkened our political horizon.

It will easily be believed that the various duties entailed upon Capt. Hay left him but little time for
scientific researches, yet this indefatigable officer had already made a fine collection of geological
specimens from the adjacent hills. I regret that
circumstances prevent me from giving any of the useful information which his industry supplied. I am only able to say, that the fossils were generally found in tertiary deposits, and were plentiful in quantity, but the variety was not great. He had at the time of our visit made, likewise, considerable progress in putting his position into as good a state of defence as circumstances allowed; of course he had not means to desilade his fort, but he had erected a breastwork four feet and a half high across the defile, which would certainly be of great use in checking any body of horsemen who might advance from the north, at least for a time sufficient to enable the garrison to prepare for an attack. The fort seemed a focus for all the rays of the sun, and was intensely hot, the thermometer ranging from 95 to 110 in the shade; nor was the situation healthy, for a great many Goorkahs were in hospital, and all were more or less debilitated from the effects of the climate.

Whilst at Badjghār we made the acquaintance of one of the chiefs, Suyed Mahommed of the Dushti Suffaëd or white desert, through whose country we
eventually travelled; we found him an easy good-
tempered man, well inclined towards the British,
but grasping and avaricious. Throughout our in-
tercourse with him he behaved well, but he took
occasion frequently to remind us we were not to
forget that he looked for a reward; still, in sum-
ming his character, I must say he was superior to
his "order;" for, either from the wish to lead a
quiet life or from his limited means and unwarlike
disposition, he was not given to feuds or chuppaos
like his neighbours. He sent rather a characteristic
letter to Shah Pursund Khān, a chief whose domi-
nions were also on our line of route, recommending
us to his notice, but concluding by telling him to
judge of us and act according to our merits.