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MURAVIEV'S VISIT
TO THE
TURCOMAN INHABITANTS
OF THE
EASTERN COAST
OF
THE CASPIAN SEA.

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

ALEXIS PETROVITSH JERMALOF, Military Governor of Georgia, General of Infantry in the Russian Imperial Service, &c., &c., conceived the project of sending an expedition to the Eastern Coast of the Caspian Sea, in order to establish friendly relations with the nomadic Turcomans inhabiting that district.

His desire was also to found a harbour on the same coast, where Russian merchantmen could find a safe anchorage, and land their cargoes in security: the harbour to be protected by a small fortified work.

Peter the Great had originally entertained this scheme as part of his grand project of establishing a direct and permanent trade with India through the great Steppe commonly called Tartary, a project defeated by the treachery of the Khivans, who put Prince Bekovitsh and all the troops he had led into their territory to the sword. This people, contrary to treaty and to their most solemn guarantees, took him prisoner, and, on the pretence that sufficient provisions were not procurable for his large army, compelled him to distribute his force among the different villages, which enabled them to catch the Prince and destroy his troops in detail.

The three remaining Russian detachments at Mangushlak, Alexander Bay, and Krasnavoda were now forced to take to their ships and return to Astraccon, abandoning the fortifications they had already commenced. The unhappy fate of Prince Bekovitsh taught us a lesson of Khivan faithlessness and blood-thirstiness, and since then all intercourse between Russia and Khiva had ceased.



The first step now to be taken for the furtherance of our scheme was to secure the alliance of the Turcomans. The latter lead a wandering life, with their flocks and herds, on the eastern shore of the Caspian, ignoring all industrial pursuits and living by theft and robbery. They wage continual war with the Persians, a war which, fed by sect animosity, never slumbers but to burst forth again with fresh fury.

It is true that in the year 1813 General Nicholas Feodorvitsh Ratishtsheff, then Military Governor of Georgia, sent a certain Derbent merchant, Ivan Muratoff, by birth an Armenian, to the Turcomans. This person, from former commercial connections with Astrabad, had made many acquaintances there. He communicated the Governor-General's proposals to Sultan Khan, who at that period exercised a kind of sovereignty over several Turcoman tribes, whom he had equipped for war and led several times to victory over the Persians. Sultan Khan was rejoiced at the promise of support made him by the Russian Governor-General (probably hoping thereby to raise himself in time to supreme rule over the unruly Turcomans), and immediately sent General Ratishtsheff a deputation composed of Chiefs from the several tribes and the most eminent men of the nation, soliciting only a few privileges and the protection of the Russian Government. Unfortunately the Envoys (among them Kiat Aga, of whom frequent mention will be found in the following pages) reached the Russian General's camp at Karabag in Giyulistan at the moment when that officer was concluding a treaty of peace with Abul Hossein Khan, the Shah of Persia's Plenipotentiary. The latter, aware how dangerous to Persia the Turcomans might become, once under Russian protection, demanded that Russia should enter into no negotiations with them. The Governor yielded, and dismissed the Envoys with valuable presents. This disappointment threw the Turcomans into great distress, and finding themselves unable to offer further resistance to Persia,



they submitted and gave hostages. Those, however, who remained recusant retired either to Balkan Bay, whither the Persians could not pursue them, or fled to Khiva, and were welcomed by the present Ruler, Mahomed Ragim Khan (a sworn enemy to the Kajar dynasty). Sultan Khan was among the latter, and lives under the Khan's protection to the present day. To Major Ponomarev, Commandant of Elisabetopol, was entrusted the management of the Turcoman negotiations, I, as Staff Officer, making, in concert with him, a survey of the eastern coast of the Caspian. The additional duty allotted to me was to proceed alone to Khiva, negotiate an alliance with the Khan, and furnish a description of the country and its inhabitants. The entries in my diary were written secretly and in as succinct a style as possible. They were originally only intended as memoranda for my own perusal and that of a few intimate friends, but on my return home, finding so many desirous to hear about the country I had visited, and my adventures there, I determined to publish these rough notes.

I only relate what happened to myself or came under my own observation, and would remind the reader that it is no easy task for a foreigner to make his notes and record his thoughts in writing amongst a people in the highest degree suspicious. It was never my intention to write a book, or much now given briefly would have been elaborated, and much other matter condensed or omitted. If, in the course of this narrative, names frequently occur which appear of trivial importance, I think I shall be forgiven when I explain that my object has been to assist any future Envoy who may be sent to the same country by giving him at the outset some insight into the circumstances and characters of the persons he may have to deal with.

MURAVIEV.



CHAPTER I.

Visit to the Turcoman inhabitants of the Eastern Coast of the Caspian Sea.

ON the 17th of June 1819 Alexis Petrovitsh Jermalof, the Commander-in-Chief in Georgia, made over to Major Ponomarev and myself all the necessary documents, and repaired to the Caucasian frontier, where the war with the Tchetches demanded his presence.

The Armenian Muratoff, who had already been among the Turcomans in the time of Nicholas Ratishtsheff, was to accompany us as interpreter.

On the same day I made my preparations for the journey, and offered up fervent prayers for divine aid in the Tiflis * Cathedral. Major Ponomarev had a separate special commission. The gifts he took over were designed only for the Turcomans. Among the instructions which I received from the Governor, and to which I was strictly to adhere in my negotiations with the Turcomans and in Khiva, were the following :—

“Your capacity for making yourself liked, as well as your acquaintance with the Tartar language, can be turned to good account. Do not regard the arts of flattery from an European point of view; they are constantly used by Asiatics, and you need never fear of being too lavish in this respect. You will be able to make other useful researches, which a residence among those tribes will suggest to you better than I can do, especially as the race you are going to is one regarding which we have but scanty information. Your qualifications and your zeal give me good grounds to expect that this attempt to establish friendly relations with the Turcomans will not be a fruitless one, and that the account you will give them of our Government will open the way to future proceedings.”

On the 18th of June I left Tiflis, and reached the post of Sagala, where just then lay a detachment of 250 Cossacks, who were proceeding on active service to Dag-i-stan against the Leksis.

* Sir Robert Ker Porter (in his *Travels in Georgia, Persia, &c.*, London, 1821) states Tiflis to possess 3,684 houses and 18,000 inhabitants.



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The night of the 19th I passed at Tausk. It rained terribly the whole day.

On the 20th the heat was intolerable. Reached Elisabetopol (called by the natives Hansha), a very beautiful town, surrounded by gardens, and stayed there until the 1st of July, as Ponomarev's military business with the Commandant of the place could not be concluded before then.

In front of the city, on the Tiflis road, stands an old fortress, which in the time of Prince Zizianow was occupied by the Khan Javot, whose guns are still to be seen on the towers. This fortress is now in ruins; in its interior are the remains of some splendid stone buildings. It has secret subterranean passages, which, however, have all either fallen in, or threaten to do so. These are said by the inhabitants to contain treasure brought in during the time of the siege. The most precious treasures of the former Khan are also said to have been buried here in a garden outside the fortress, and to have been disinterred by the son of the murdered Khan Javot. This, however, is only report. Within the walls of the fortress my attention was attracted by an enormous tree, measuring 27 feet in circumference.

On the evening of the 1st we left Elisabetopol in a light cart, which broke down on the road. This accident forced me to pass the night in the open, half way to Kurge, which I had hoped to reach. When the moon rose I started again, and reached Turgan on the night of the 2nd, the heat having been unbearable during the whole day. At Mingitshaur I crossed the Kur by a ferry.

My way had hitherto lain through a barren steppe, relieved here and there by patches of salt marsh, but now the country quite changed its character. The banks of the Kur are very beautiful, offering on either side a pleasing prospect of wood and garden, from which peep the Armenian homesteads.

To my front, as I left the river, lay a range of sterile hills, the radiation from which greatly added to the heat; but to the right stretched a vast plain, richly cultivated and populous, in the midst of which were the ruins of the town of Arevsh.* Very early on the morning of the 3rd I left Turgan, and by night reached New Shamakha, † formerly the residence of Mustapha, Khan of Shirwan. The Khan's

* Arevsh. In *Salmov's Description of the Caspian*, A.D. 1726, this town is called Arrash.

† New Shamakha. Lat. 40° 34' N.



predecessors had always made Old Shamakha their capital, but from the earliest days the majority of the people had settled in the fertile country around the site of the new town. Mustapha abandoned the capital of his ancestors, and built New Shamakha in order the better to overawe his subjects by his presence in their midst; but the plain was at once deserted, the inhabitants betaking themselves to the mountains and settling at Fith, to which place the Khan was obliged to shift his residence. New Shamakha is now only a Cossack station.

The road ran for about four and a half miles through the flat country, and then over the precipitous hills separating New from Old Shamakha. This mountain road, although nothing to speak of in the way of length, was still so steep, that the horses were quite exhausted, and it was with great difficulty that I reached the station by evening. What a glorious spectacle now rewarded my toils! The rich champaign beneath me stretching away to the horizon; the picturesque hills amongst which I stood; the numerous Armenian villages, some on the slopes, some in the hollows, surrounded on every side by sheaves of corn; the husbandmen all busy at the harvest,—all these combined to make up a gorgeous and magnificent scene. Apart from the picturesque, however, that fruitful plain is remarkable for the culture of silk-worms, which is carried on to a great extent, especially in the neighbourhood of Shamakha, and which brings wealth and prosperity to the country.

Old Shamakha,* or Kognashahar (*i.e.*, “old town”), presents an imposing appearance with its ruins, its baths, mosques, and palaces.

Even the fortifications excite our admiration for the builders of this ancient capital. The Khan's castle stands on rising ground, which affords a fine view of the town. The Post Office is established in a caravanserai of noble proportions. At some distance from the fortress stands the citadel built by Lutra, a virgin Czarina, whose remains rest here. Some deep excavations within the walls are said to mark the site of her tomb. The common people believe that these cavities were ransacked by Mustapha in the hope of treasure, but that the spirit of Lutra frustrated his endeavours.

On the 5th I started from Old Shamakha, and, passing two staging places on the road, finally reached Glubokaya balka, where I passed the night. This is only a Cossack post in the

* Old Shamakha was sacked by the famous Nadir Shah in 1726.



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middle of a barren and waterless steppe. The aspect of the country changes here, and the eye encounters a steppe studded with the ruins of towns and hamlets, only relieved by some hills, and at wide intervals by occasional patches of pasture land. On the following day I reached the Cossack post of Arbat, a well-built and regular fortress, where I overtook the cart with the presents which had left Elisabetopol before me. On the 7th I reached Baku.* From the heights before the city I got a good view of the whole place, and of the sea and shipping. The town is girt by a double wall, turreted and embrasured and furnished with guns. The interior is handsome and extensive, but the bald hills without the walls have an unpleasing appearance. The scarcity of wood and water in the neighbourhood is a great drawback to its value as a fortress, and the situation of the place generally is bad. The streets of Baku are narrow; the buildings high and not bad-looking: the town possesses a numerous population, a fair market, and excellent caravanserais, and it has an important trade with Astraccan. Ship-building goes on in the port, but the craft ply only along the coast, and do not go further than Ghilan. A lofty tower stands on the shore, known as the "Maiden Tower," a name which it owes to the following tragical story:—In ancient times a Governor of Baku fell in love with his own daughter, and desired to place her in the position of his wife. For long the girl resisted his importunities, but at last consented, making it a condition of her compliance that her father should build a high tower for her on the sea beach, wherein she might hide her shame. The tower was quickly built, and the daughter, enticing her father to the topmost pinnacle on the pretence of showing him the height, seized her opportunity as he bent to gaze beneath, and pushed him over the parapet, flinging herself after him into the sea.

We found the two (2) ships which had been equipped for us lying in port all ready, so we laid in necessities and went on board, taking with us one officer and thirty men from the Baku garrison. The vessels were the Corvette *Kasan*, 18 Guns, under Lieutenant Bassargin, which had arrived from Astraccan the year before (1818), and the Merchant sloop *St. Polikarp*, under Lieutenant Ostrolopov. This last was not armed, being only intended as a transport for the troops and spare baggage. The naval officials on board the

* Baku, compounded from the Persian words *bāz* wind, and *gāh* a street.



corvette were as follows :—Lieutenant Bassargin, two sub-officers, Juriev and Ivanov, the Chaplain, the Surgeon, Formizin, Lieutenant Linitzki of the Artillery, and the Pilot and Master. The force, all told, amounted to 160 men. On the evening of the 8th we accepted the invitation of the ship's officers, and went on shore to a small house called the "Sea Bath;" on our way we passed the ruins of the great caravanserai lying at a distance of seven miles from the shore and completely submerged, with the exception of a few turrets rising above the surface. It is unknown how or when this building sank into the sea, but it is most likely the result of an earthquake. At this point there is a depth of about 18 feet, and it is noticed that every 13 years important changes take place on this part of the coast, the sea sometimes receding from, and sometimes encroaching on, the land.

The whole neighbourhood is well worthy of attention both on account of the naphtha which it produces and the mighty ruins which lie scattered on every side and invite historical research.

On the 17th of July we went on board the corvette again, and at 6 o'clock on the following evening (18th) weighed anchor, and stood for the Island of Sara, whither the transport had preceded us on the 15th. At first we had a good breeze, but it fell in the night, and we spent the whole of the next day in tacking without making any perceptible progress. On the night of the 20th there fell a dead calm, and we lay motionless for two hours and a half, but at day-break we sighted Sara, and by noon we moored close by the island. This island is six miles in length, in form a crescent, its beach shelly, and its whole surface covered with sedge and rushes, except here and there where Russian squatters have planted a few osiers. In former days all the water was brackish in the wells here, but the Russians introduced wooden linings for the latter, and, by continually emptying and clearing them, managed to obtain a supply of fresh water.

The transport now made sail for the fortresses of Lenkoran to take in wood.

The distance from Sara is about 12 miles. We lay at anchor until the 24th, and all this time it rained without ceasing.

On the 24th, at 7 A.M., we weighed, with a good breeze from N.E., which lasted till midnight, and we were sanguine

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of sighting the Turcoman coast on the following day, when suddenly the wind died away, and we hardly made $1\frac{1}{2}$ knots an hour. This state of things lasted for two whole days—no breeze and torrents of rain; and it was not until the evening of the third day that the sky cleared.

We wished to steer on the so-called "Silver Hill" of which we had heard, but none of the crew were acquainted with the coast.

At last the Turcoman land came in view, and we recognised the Ak-Tapa (white hill), which runs from the coast in a north-easterly direction. It is of a considerable length, and diminishes in height as it approaches the sea. We anchored in $4\frac{1}{2}$ fathoms at a distance of $5\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the shore, and, on searching the beach with our telescopes, made out some "Kibitks" (Turcoman carts). It was accordingly resolved that I should land next morning and reconnoitre the country, while Petrovitsh, the Interpreter, endeavoured to establish intercourse between us and the inhabitants. The 12-oared long-boat was therefore lowered from the corvette and armed with a 12-pounder and two falconets. The party altogether numbered 24 men, six of whom carried muskets, and as we counted on returning the same evening, we only took provisions and water for the day. After a pull of an hour and a half we came within 120 yards of the beach, and were obliged to anchor, as there was not sufficient water to admit of our getting closer in; so we got on land with only our arms and clothes. Forty yards from the water line were a lot of mounds, evidently thrown up by the action of the wind on the sand, and covered with bushes. I ascended one of these, and discovered, by means of my telescope, that the Ak-Tapa, instead of being an isolated hill, was a great mountain, which must be connected with some other chain. It was about eight miles distant, and seemed to be so entirely cut off by water from the place where I stood, that I imagined myself to be on a detached island.*

At first I wished to explore towards the north, in order to discover the bay where the Turcomans conceal their "Kirshima"† (boats), but Dobritsch, the artillery officer, Petrovitsh, and a sailor, called Agejeve, who had been here

* I found out afterwards that the apparent sea was only a salt steppe or a dry lake, covered with crystallized salt, which, shining through the moving vapours formed by the heat, had quite the appearance of water from a distance.

† Kirshima. This word is derived from the Turkish Kirji, i.e., a flat-bottomed boat.



before, advised me to try to southward instead, more in the direction of Astrabad; and I acted on their advice, having further a hope of coming on a river by so doing. I accordingly went along the beach with four sailors and Petrovitsh, whilst the rest of the party in the long-boat kept up with us. Before starting we bored for water, but found it quite salt and undrinkable. We went steadily along the shore for 11 miles, found the traces of camels, horses, and bare-footed men, and at last a post with a mark on it, among the bushes, which made me think that the Turcoman carts might be concealed there. I crawled to the place through the undergrowth, but found only a sand hill with a lot of dry brushwood on it, in the midst of which the post had been stuck up. Wearied and disappointed, I determined at 3 P.M. to go back to the corvette, leaving Petrovitsh on shore to ~~try~~ and find out some of the inhabitants.

We were carrying out this plan, when suddenly a strong gale got up from seaward, and when only 1,500 paces away from land, we found we could make no head against it; the waves broke over us, and Juriev advised that we should put back.

This storm caused me great anxiety, for we were without provisions and water, and it seemed quite possible that it might continue to blow for a week; and the chance of a sudden attack from the Turcomans gave me another ground for uneasiness. Resolved to make the best of it, I landed the two falconets and occupied a couple of hillocks, throwing round the bivouac a chain of sentries, whom Juriev and I visited alternately from time to time during the night. We also lit a huge fire to indicate our whereabouts to the corvette. The fine, blinding dust which was blown about caused great annoyance to us all. I dug for fresh water here, but unsuccessfully, the water we got at being brackish and unfit for drinking purposes.

In the evening Petrovitsh came in with the news that he had not found a living creature in the neighbourhood, so, exhausted with fatigue and thirst, we passed a most wretched night in the sand. Next day (30th) our situation became more critical every hour; the storm raged with increasing fury, the provisions came to an end, and our thirst became more and more insufferable, so much so, that some of the men dipped their last biscuits in the sea-water, hoping thereby to allay their dreadful pangs,—we were, indeed, at the last extremity, and immediate action became imperative; so I



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resolved on penetrating further into the steppe, to the hills visible in the distance, in the hope of discovering some Turcoman habitations ("Yurts" as they are called), or, at any rate, striking fresh water. I therefore directed Juriev to shift our position to a point nearer the sea and to make it more compact, posting only one look-out party during the day. I was on the point of starting, when of a sudden the long-boat began to sink; we all rushed into the sea, threw everything overboard, and with great difficulty managed to haul the boat up on to the beach, when we found she had sprung a leak, but not of a very serious nature. We now armed and set out for the opposite edge of the steppe, the party consisting of the artillery officer, Petrovitsh, myself, four sailors, and two pioneers.

For upwards of an hour we waded through heavy sand, and were quite worn out, when suddenly we sank to the knee in a black bog, which formed the centre of a great dried-up salt lake. Here I had bitter experience of the deceitfulness of the famous "mirage," for this dry salt lake had from afar the appearance of a piece of water, with people on the banks; but when we reached it, lo! the water was nowhere, and the men had turned into bushes, and instead of plunging into a cold stream, we found ourselves stuck in a morass! We had to retrace our steps, and on the way back I dug for water in three different places, but found it all brackish.

I may mention that in this search I employed a means which I had heard of in Persia by which time is saved: this is simply to fire down the hole one has dug, which brings the water into it immediately. The plan was perfectly successful, in so far as obtaining water went, but it unfortunately could not alter the quality of the same. Worn out and disappointed, I now returned to my party, and determined not to make any further attempts, but to trust to the storm's going down. At last the weather improved, and we resolved to despatch the sub-officer and 12 sailors to the corvette in the long-boat. When the moon rose the long-boat put off. I sent a note by it to Ponomarev describing in a few words our situation, begging him for help, and telling him that, in the event of any mishap, we should make for Astrabad on foot. By noon (31st) the long-boat returned with but a small supply of provisions and a letter from Ponomarev entreating us to return. Meanwhile the sea had gone down, so we embarked, and in two or three hours reached the corvette in safety. I took the latitude, and found that we were in $37^{\circ}24'37''$ N.



According to Count Voinovitch's map* this would place us directly opposite the "White Hill," but the ordinary ship's chart placed us far to the north of this point, so I came to the conclusion that the hill before us was the "Green Hill." Strengthened in this opinion by the circumstance that the Astrabad mountain chain was not in sight, we made up our minds to try for the "White Hill" further south. In the evening we weighed anchor, but the wind was unfavourable, and we made little progress.

On Sunday morning (August 1st) we were told that three Turcoman craft were in view near the shore. We went on deck and made out 10 boats; they had sails set, and were steering northwards. We were very anxious to pick up at any rate one of the number, and accordingly fired a gun as a signal, but they did not understand it, and made all sail away from us. We now fired two rounds at them, but they were out of range, so we sent a boat in pursuit with an armed party, and Petrovitsh among them. An attempt was made to cut off the last "Kirshime," but when the crew saw their situation, they promptly ran her ashore and fled into the bush, their number being 5 men and 3 women. Our party likewise landed and gave chase. Petrovitsh managed to stop one of the men and assure him that we had no hostile intentions, but had come only with friendly designs. On this they all came out of their hiding-place and begged for mercy. We again assured them they had nothing to fear from us, and then let them all go, except the owner of the boat, who was an old man of sixty, and held in great respect by his countrymen. His name was Dowlat Ali.

In spite of all our caresses and friendly assurances he would not believe us, but looked on himself as a captive, and seemed by his downcast bearing to expect a terrible fate.

From his replies to our interrogations it appeared that we really had been opposite the "White Hill," and that the "Silver Hill"† lay somewhat to the south. The "Yurts" of these Turcomans are situated between the two above-mentioned hills, on the sea-coast. The place is called Hassan Kuli, and

* Journal of Count Voinovitch's Expedition to the Caspian in 1781-82. Moscow, 1810.

† The Silver Hill received its name from the Turcomans (by whom it is called Gumish Tapa) on account of the silver coins they frequently used to find in earthen vessels among the ruins. The coins were about the size of a shilling, and as the natives could not decipher the inscription, they put them down to Alexander the Great's era. The bricks 1½ x 2' of these ruins have for long been an article of trade between the Turcomans and Persia.—STRAHL.



here dwells the elder Kiat Aga,* who had gone as Envoy to General Ratishtsheff as far back as 1813. The Turcomans graze their herds on the "Silver Hill," and although it is at a pretty good distance off, it is still their favourite resort, being convenient for their boats, on which their entire trade depends.

Their water-supply they obtain from the river "Giurgen-Jai,"† which falls into the sea by the Silver Hill, and flows about half a day's ride from their village. It is a whole day's ride from the Giurgen-Jai to Astrabad. On the road there is another little river called Khwaja Nafas‡.

Dowlat Ali spoke of the ruins of many great cities as existing in the country of the Turcomans, among others, one on the Silver Hill, ascribed by the natives to Alexander the Great.§ The Sultan Khan or Jadukar of whom Petrovitsh had so often spoken was now at Khiva, where he had taken refuge from the Persians at the close of the war of 1813. From what I could gather from Dowlat Ali, I think I may safely assert that the Turcomans have no common Ruler, but that they are split up into tribes, each tribe acknowledging its own particular elder or Chief. Dowlat Ali could only mention five such Chieftains, but assured me that there were many more. He further said that the people of Khiva live in great amity and constant intercourse with the Turcomans; and that from here to Khiva was a 15 days' ride.

We could get no more out of him. He showed much discomposure at being alone among foreigners, and desired to be speedily landed, promising to send Kiat Aga to us. This determined us on casting anchor opposite the place where he said we should find some "Yurts," but the vast shallows compelled us to stand so far off from the coast that we actually lost sight of it. In the evening, at a general consultation, we decided, on Ponomarev's suggestion, to put Dowlat Ali and Petrovitsh ashore, and to await their return and Kiat's opposite to the Silver Hill. We hoped also to get nearer the shore opposite this hill and to obtain a fresh supply of water, as well as to have greater facilities for opening negotiations

* Kiat Aga's portrait will be found in the Appendix. It presents a characteristic type of the Turcoman features.—STRAHL.

† Jai in Russian means tea, in Turkish a river.—STRAHL.

‡ Khwaja is the epithet applied to a Mussulman pilgrim to Mecca. Khwaja Nafas signifies literally pilgrim's breath.

§ The Persians generally ascribe the ruins which they cannot account for otherwise to Alexander the Great, in the same way that the Swiss make Cæsar the founder of all their old towers, &c.—STRAHL.



with the Turcomans and searching for the best spot for the contemplated harbour. Until close on evening we lay at anchor, waiting for the wind to fall and enable us to land Petrovitsh and Dowlat Ali, but before night-fall it was settled that we should go on at once to the Silver Hill, whence I should start on my journey to Khiva. In the night we saw the reflection of fire in two parts of the heavens. This was put down by Dowlat Ali to the dry grass having caught fire.

We then cast anchor and awaited daybreak. At 7 A.M. we came to the Silver Hill, and found our sloop which had preceded us from Sara, and had been lying here for three days.

Lieutenant Ostolopov, the Commander of the Sloop, presented Nazar Margan to us, the Chief of the Nomadic Turcomans who wander in the district lying round the hill. His appearance was pleasing, but was apparently not borne out by his real character. From him we learnt that there were 200 Turcoman families * in this "Ahl" (village), who had settled here for good. They are agriculturists, and seem prosperous. We entertained Nazar Margan hospitably, and he undertook to conduct Petrovitsh to Kiat Aga, who was just then attending some fair, or engaged in some commercial transactions with the Persians. The dignity of a Kiat is very considerable among the Turcomans. He is generally acknowledged as their head by the elders of several tribes, yet in a very optional manner, "for," say they, "God is our only Governor." These people cherish an unconquerable hatred of the Persians. We were presently visited by eight Turcomans, whom we feasted with "pilau," and did all we could to ingratiate ourselves with them. The matter in hand being Petrovitsh's conveyance to the Kiat, Nazar Margan, who had previously agreed to conduct him for three ducats, rose now in his demands to five, and eventually to 10, ducats. Then Ponomarev lost all patience, and sent them all out of the corvette, retaining only Nazar Margan, but that gentleman now refused to undertake the commission, and referred us to Dowlat Ali. The latter willingly agreed, but when we made him a small present, Nazar became so excited by envy, that we had to pacify him with some flints and a pound of gunpowder. Petrovitsh started the same evening. We may predicate of the Turcomans that their simple mode of living stands in remarkable contrast to their insatiable lust for gold.

* A Kibitke can be estimated at six souls. The word signifies in Russian a half-covered, badly built, four-wheeled cart, among the nomadic hordes it means a family.—STEARNS.

The Silver Hill does not appear very lofty. The Turcomans say that the ruins of a town, called Gushi Tappa, are to be seen on its slopes. I found the latitude here to be $37^{\circ} 5' 22''$.

This morning (4th August) I went on board the sloop, and from that proceeded in a skiff with Ostolopov to get a nearer look at the Giurgen River, which falls into the sea a mile and a half to the south of the Silver Hill.

The sloop's boat, carrying 10 soldiers, 2 falconets, and 1 cannon, followed us, but at about a mile from shore the shallows stopped its further progress. The sailors now dragged the skiff ashore, and I got into a "Kulass" (*i.e.*, a hollowed-out log in use with the Turcomans as a canoe) and proceeded about a mile up the river mouth.

The river Giurgen flows through a swamp, has a muddy bottom, is from 12 to 24 yards in breadth, and has low banks, from which stretches on either side the morass, covered with a 3-foot high grass. The water tastes brackish and smells marshy. From its gentle fall, the river has a sluggish flow. It frequently dries up in summer, yet is never entirely without some water. A mile from the mouth I noticed "Baktsha" (cultivation), proving that the Turcomans of this part are agriculturists. At this point the river is over 6 feet deep, the banks higher and dry, but these sound banks only extend to a distance of 400 or 800 yards, and, further up, the river crawls again through bog and fen. At this point also there is a ford, where the Turcomans cross their herds, and through which the high road to Astrabad runs. I got a good view of the Silver Hill from here. It lies 3 miles or so 33° north-west from the ford. Here dwell some Turcomans, with whom I conversed for about two hours; they invited me into their village, but I promised them a visit on the following day. They said it was the universal wish of their countrymen that the Russians should restore the razed fortress on the Silver Hill, "for," said they, "we should then be able to revenge ourselves on the Persians for their ravages. We Turcomans are stupid people, or we should have rebuilt the place ourselves before now, but that is a job we cannot manage. If we were all called out, we should muster over 10,000 men, and could then chastise the Persians, as, indeed, we did five years ago at this place, when we defeated the Sirdars and captured many head of cattle."

I asked them if they would not like some arms. They looked at one another with beaming countenances, clucked their tongues, and were evidently overjoyed at the thought.



They have constant intercourse with Khiva, and assured me that with an escort of 5 or 6 men one might safely make the journey thither.

According to them Khiva is a large town, and the ruling Khan immensely rich. The Turcomans of this district are agriculturists; the soil is fruitful, and they are cattle-breeders to a large extent. They are also powder manufacturers, and it seems that their only deficiency is in mechanical works. A wood lies at a distance of 11 miles from the river, and extends to Astrabad. It is reported to be of vast dimensions and to furnish good timber. I learned that the day before my arrival Petrovitsh had been at this "Ahl." He had started in a Kirshime on his way to the Kiat, accompanied by Dowlat Ali and two villagers.

6th August.—This morning the sloop's boat was sent to bring off Nazar Margan and the notables of the "Ahl." They arrived at the corvette towards mid-day. One of the Chiefs appeared as the representative of Khan Dowlat Ali. Nazar Margan exerted himself to the utmost to persuade us that it was quite unnecessary to send Dowlat Ali a special invitation; but it is probable that his motive was the hope of himself receiving the present intended for the Khan. When Khan Dowlat Ali did arrive, he explained that he did not come earlier, as he did not wish to infringe the custom which forbids Khans to pay visits without invitation.

The true cause was, however, that he did not want to connect himself with us, as he had an awe of the Persians, to whom he owed his Khanship. Dowlat Ali Khan showed more intelligence than the other Turcomans; he had served in Aga Mahomed Khan's army, and been present at the sack of Tiflis. He had now fallen away from the reigning Shah, Fatteh Ali, and been forthwith elected Chief at his own birth-place. We gained no further intelligence from him beyond what we had already heard from the others; he acknowledges no one as having a claim to sovereignty over the Turcomans, and seems to be more Persian than Russian in his tendencies. He named to us also several of the most notable among the elders or Chiefs, such as Kiat Aga of the "Ahl" Hassan Kuli, Tagan Kulij Khan of the village of Gerai, Tepe Mirza Khan of the same place, and Kodsham Kulibai and Tagan-Cazi of Atrek. The River Atrek runs 11 miles north of the Giurgen. "Ahls" lie on the banks of both rivers, but along the whole course of the Giurgen are to be seen the ruins of fortifications and cities.

Ponomarev wrote to all the above-named Chiefs, inviting them to visit him. He presented the Khan with a piece of gold brocade, and entrusted the letters to him for delivery ; but we kept Nazar Margan on the corvette as a hostage.

This person now told us that he had it from Dowlat Ali that the Turcomans imagined that next autumn would see the arrival of many Russian ships with troops and guns, and that they were all in great dread of this. At length Petrovitsh arrived to-day with Kiat Aga. The latter is superior to all his countrymen in shrewdness, and acknowledges no superior. For some time Sultan Khan ruled over the Turcomans, but soon abandoned the Government, and fled to Khiva, probably from fear of the Persians. He had really no particular right to the Government, and held the reins solely from his superior abilities. He would appear to have come originally from the confines of Khiva or India, and devoted himself to the study of magic, whence his soubriquet of "Jadugar." At first Kiat Aga was suspicious and distrustful, and when Ponomarev unfolded to him the plan of our Government he demurred for a long time. At last, said he—"If your motives are upright, I am ready to serve you, but you will gain your end much better in 'Cheleken.' There I have relations, and the coast, too, is far more adapted to the construction of the work you contemplate, and it is only a 15 days' ride from there to Khiva.

"I am ready to accompany you to Cheleken myself, and as there are some of Sultan Khan's people there, I shall send your Agents with them to Khiva." I now landed at the Silver Hill, and thence went to pay a visit to Dowlat Ali Khan in his "Ahl," and discovered that the hill I had seen was only the walls of a large building which had been covered with sand from the east side of the steppe, and thus from a distance resembled a natural rise. The inhabitants have cultivated this sandy soil to a certain extent. On the other side of the building, towards the sea, there are many ruins visible. The distance to the "Ahl" is a little over 1,500 paces. I halted my escort of 12 men in front of the village, and went alone to the Khan, who received me most cordially. A number of people assembled at his house (Kibitke), and his wife did not withdraw. He entertained me with sour camel's milk and bread, and begged that I should let my party enter the village, which I gladly agreed to. Mirza Khan, to whom Ponomarev had written, was already in the "Ahl." He visited me at Dowlat Ali Khan's house, and expressed his desire to accompany me back to the corvette, but afterwards



changed his mind, and said he would await the arrival of the three other invited Chiefs. The Khan was very anxious to see our soldiers "play with their muskets" as he expressed it, "for," said he, "we have heard from all sides that the Russians are so highly instructed, that when one man strikes the ground with his foot, 300, or even more, will do the same thing simultaneously, and this I should much like to see." I made the soldiers go through some manoeuvres and fire, which filled all the spectators with astonishment.

The dwelling-places of the Turcomans are constructed like those of the Tartars in Georgia, that is to say, they consist of rush mats stretched on long poles, the whole being covered with felt.

Their women are not kept in privacy, and the features of the latter are agreeable and pretty regular, their dress consisting of coloured "Shirovari," a long red chemise and a head-dress which has much in common with the Russian "Kokoshniks," only it is two or three times as high. This head-dress among the wealthy is edged with gold or silver. The hair is shown on the forehead, but combed modestly off on either side and plaited into a long tail behind.

7th August.—This morning I visited the Silver Hill, taking with me workmen and implements in the hopes of procuring some coins among the ruins, so as to establish the age of the ancient city. It was, however, necessary first to divert the attention of the Turcomans from my intentions, so I landed an officer with some soldiers and a drummer, and while these entered the "Ahl" and went through military exercises, I proceeded undisturbed with my researches. I cannot give any satisfactory explanation with regard to these ruins. The Silver Hill is, as above mentioned, only the shell of some huge building or fortress, which has been covered with sand from the eastern side; nevertheless within those walls I found tombs, and, indeed, got at some human remains, buried after the Mahomedan fashion, i.e., resting on one side with the head towards the north-east. I think these must be Turcoman tombs and very ancient. The great wall is about 600 feet long and over 12 feet in height. It consists of beautiful burnt bricks, and it is noteworthy that after every three layers of Georgian bricks there is one layer of Russian. Beneath the wall I discovered a small vault, which I rummaged, but found in it nothing but broken glass and ashes.

From this wall there runs a tongue of land, apparently the handiwork of man, into the sea, to the distance of about 280

yards. In several places I found the remains of buildings, round towers, stair-cases, and such like, faced in the most regular manner with great bricks over a foot thick. Here also there are great heaps of loose bricks, stretching into the sea to the distance of one or two hundred yards. It struck me that those ruins were not the work of ordinary decay, but rather that the structures had succumbed to an earthquake (like the caravanserai on the road from Baku), as the walls were all of a fair height, and seemed to have been cut sharply off, so to say, at a certain point.

The people about have found many gold and silver coins here, and the tradition is that the fortress was built by the Russians, * who once possessed this sea-board. I dug down into one of the round towers, but came upon nothing, except some *débris* of glass and earthenware jars, possessing none of the characteristics of Russian work. I would have pursued my researches further and have worked down to the very foundation, but the tremendous heat quite overpowered the labourers I had employed.

The description of the Silver Hill given in the History of the Russian Naval Expedition to the Caspian Sea in the year 1782 under Count Voinovitch does not in the least agree with my own personal observations. In that account the Silver Hill is described as an island, which it most certainly is not. It is therefore reasonable to suppose that the discrepancy is due to the frequent alterations on the shores of the Caspian, caused by alternate encroaching and retiring of the sea. The Kiat and other Turcomans declared that the Silver Hill really had been an island, and had only become one with the dry land five or six years ago. I landed early with Kiat, and made a survey of the country between the Silver Hill and the River Giurgen, then went up stream, and came across another little river running into the Giurgen from the north, its banks covered with sedge. Kiat declared that formerly an arm of the sea separated the Silver Hill from the main land at this point, and further told me to warn my people who had gone out for water not to scatter, but to be on the look-out, as the

* They probably believe the pirate Stenka Rasin to have been the founder, but erroneously so, for Rasin never visited the Eastern Coast of the Caspian. The Silver Hill is the last fortress in the wall now called Kism Alai (gold giving). Along this wall were scattered smaller forts, such as Kuru-Segri, Jorshan, and many others, the traces of which and of the wall are to be found at the present day all along the right bank of the Giurgen. Native traditions do not throw any light on the age of this wall, but some information is given in the *Bibliothèque Orientale d'Herbelot*, who holds it to be the boundary between Turan and Iran.



Persians had bribed the Turcomans of other "Ahls" to shoot us from the cover of the reeds.

11th August.—The heat was insupportable, and when, at 2 P.M., I had completed my survey, I took refuge in the "Ahl," and was received in a very friendly manner by Dowlat Ali Khan and Nazar Margan. Kiat told me that the "White Hill," called in Turkish Ak-Tapa, had originally gone by the name of "Ak Bartlain," derived from a swamp grass known in Russian also as Bartlain.

There is a spring in a cleft on this hill, from which spouts a jet of salt water with great noise.

17th August.—Kiat, Dowlat Ali Khan, and Kojam Kuli Bey (another of the Chiefs) now assembled on board the corvette, but Mirza Khan and Tagan Kolij Khan did not put in an appearance. They sent us a message telling us to wait for them, but I believe they only wanted an opportunity when their coming would not excite the suspicion of the Persians,—a consideration which was always present in their minds. But Ponomarev would not wait for them. He proposed to the three Chiefs that they should send Kiat as Envoy to the Russian Governor in Georgia, giving him letters of credit and the powers of a plenipotentiary. They received this proposal with great satisfaction, and desired to gain the acquiescence of all the elders, and indeed the Cazi, himself, their spiritual Ruler, who, according to what they said, would appear to be the head of the tribe of Yomud. Kiat undertook to bring the consent of the other Turcoman Chiefs of the Yomud tribe within four days, so we determined to put him ashore, and then to proceed to Hassan Kuli and await his return at that place. Then we were to go to the Bay of Krasnavoda, lying by the Balkan, and get the Chiefs of that district to subscribe to the above-mentioned letters, and after that we were to make arrangements for my journey to Khiva.

The dignity of the Khans is not hereditary; they are appointed by the Persians, and the people obey them from a regard for their superior wisdom or virtues. All are free, and no Turcoman is the slave of another. The fields are tilled by slaves, whom they either purchase or capture.

The power of the Ak Sakhkali (lit. white beards), or head chiefs elected by the people, appears to be greater than that of the Khans, and the position is hereditary so long as the successor's qualifications inspire confidence.

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24th August.—I went ashore, and took leave of Dowlat Ali Khan, who for the fourth time offered me the present of a stallion, which, however, I had to reject, because I could not take him with me. Then I returned with Kolij Beg and a relation of Kiat's to the corvette, which had already weighed anchor. We distributed presents among them, and learned from Kiat's relation that the Turcomans on the Persian frontier acknowledge the sway of the Persians, whilst those on the Atrek River, and further north, do not recognize their authority. On the whole, it is impossible to say of this people who is their real Ruler. We landed Kiat's cousin, and directed him to go at once to Hassan Kuli, and let the Kiat know of our shortly-to-be-expected arrival.

The Turcomans have no decided or earnest character, and none of that love of justice which characterizes the Caucasian type.

This miserable race is devoid of all ideas of hospitality. Their only thought is money, and for a trifle they are prepared for any baseness. They have no idea of obedience or discipline, but if a clever and enterprising individual starts up, they acknowledge him as their head without questioning his right to the post. Sultan Khan's case is one in point. They are equally devoid of public spirit and of modesty. A man calls himself a Chief or an elder only to make something by it, and his neighbour forthwith adopts a higher title to spite him, such as Ak Sakkal, &c. The language of the Turcomans is Turkish, and their dialect resembles that spoken in Kasan. None of them, except the priests (Mullas), can read or write. They are Mahomedans and followers of Omar.

Although strict in observing religious ceremonies and in praying at the prescribed hours, they are totally ignorant of the first principles of their faith. Physically they are a fine race, tall and broad-shouldered. They wear a short beard, and greatly resemble the Calmucks in their features. They dress after the Persian fashion. The women dress their hair with great care, and attach a number of jingling silver gew-gaws to the plaits behind. If I happened to stray unexpected into an Ahl, I would find them in the simplest attire, but before I left they would all be sitting in front of their houses, dressed in their very best. These remarks apply only to the Turcomans of the "Silver Hill," who have acquired Persian manners and customs to a certain extent. The Northern Turcomans differ from the other tribes considerably. We arrived in the corvette before Hassan



Kuli, but on account of shoals had to keep out to sea, so far that the land was invisible to the naked eye. With the telescope we descried a number of Turcoman craft. The latitude was here ascertained to be $37^{\circ} 27' 51''$.

27th August.—Ponomarev and I now went ashore with a quantity of presents. It took us two hours to reach land, and we had hardly done so, when such a breeze sprang up from the seaward that we could not regain the corvette until the 31st.

On account of the shallow water we could not bring our boat nearer than 600 yards from land. Kiat came to meet us, with all the inhabitants of the Ahl, and we found a Kibitk prepared for our especial residence and provided with handsome carpets. There are 150 Kibitks in Hassan Kuli. Boat-building is carried on here to a certain extent, timber being brought for the purpose from the Silver Hill district. I found the remains of an old redoubt, built years before by Kiat as a safeguard against the attacks of the Kaklas, who, it appears, are much dreaded by the Yomuds.

The name of Hassan Kuli is derived from that of the founder of this tribe, who settled here in ancient times. This strip of land was then an island, but in these days it is connected with the main land on the north side, and forms a peninsula, separated from the land on its east side by an arm of the sea 11 miles long by five and a half broad. Both this estuary and the peninsula run due north and south. The peninsula is only 1,600 feet across and four miles long. Opposite the Ahl, E. S. E., on the other side of the estuary, the little river Atrek falls into the sea. On its banks there are many Yurts of Turcomans belonging to this same Yomud tribe, and the inhabitants of Hassan Kuli depend on it for their supply of fresh water. Kiat took great pains to amuse us with Turcoman sports. These consisted in shooting at a mark both with guns and bows and arrows, wrestling, and running races, and the competitors were incited to do their utmost by the money which Ponomarev dealt out with no sparing hand. Their fire-arms are most inferior, and their powder has no strength. They seldom hit the mark. Some of the competitors were wonderfully well-dressed. The tribe leads a pretty lazy life, and it may therefore be assumed that they derive a large profit from the one trade they engage in, *viz.* carrying naphtha and salt to the Persian market. They annually dispose of about 2,000 "Puds" (Russian) of these articles. This trade belongs more particularly to the Turcomans dwelling round the Bay of Balkan, who procure both

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the salt and naphtha from the Naphtha Island, but the inhabitants of Hassan Kuli purchase their stock from them, and take it at a good profit to Persia; hence the circumstance of the latter possessing so large a number of boats (Kirshimes). Very fair carpets are manufactured at Hassan Kuli; the people are, in fact, clever workmen on the whole. Their silver-smiths strike all sorts of medallions and coins, which serve for the adornment of the women. Their musical instrument is a two-stringed guitar.

They till their land and graze their flocks and herds on the Rivers Atrek and Giurgen. From the insufficiency of their own corn-crops, they are obliged to draw to a considerable extent on Persia for grain. On the peninsula itself water-melons are the only vegetables that thrive. The yearly take of fish has for some time back been reduced to a half of what it used to be. In winter they catch many swans, utilizing only the down. On the coast snipe or wood-cock always abound (called by the people "Jiluk" and Kunkaitak). On the steppes and the reedy banks of the Atrek wolves are to be met with, also foxes, wild goats ("Jairan"), wild pig, jackals, &c. The wind almost invariably blows on to the land here, which renders communication difficult. It is very desirable that the Hassan Kuli estuary should be carefully surveyed and sounded. At present one cannot assume that large vessels could find an anchorage in it, although light craft probably could. The following are some of the principal Chiefs of Hassan Kuli:—Il-Mahomed, Khan Haldi, Dowlat Ali, and we may add the name of Kiat. There are others who are on bad terms with Kiat, so the Ahl is divided into two factions, of which Kiat's is at present the stronger.

28th August.—Towards evening Petrovitsh arrived from the Atrek River, whither he had proceeded the day before, and brought with him the Cazi and Kojan Kuli Bey, who are much respected by the Turcomans. Although the Cazi was very young, they paid the greatest deference to him, because he had inherited the dignity from his father, who had commanded universal confidence. We soon won him over by presents. The necessary documents had now been subscribed to by the principal Chiefs, but Ponomarev still desired that Kiat should proceed as Envoy to our Government by the votes of all the Turcomans. He accordingly assembled all the Chiefs before the Cazi and Kiat, and the latter was elected *nem. con.* for the post of Ambassador,



But Kiat took offence because we had made out the list of notable Turcomans without consulting him, and because we had given presents to Meer Said, Haji Mahomed, and Tamari Kuli (who had been made "Sirdars" for their valour), and he was the more irritated because, as it seemed, he had previously promised presents to several individuals on his own account (who were now disappointed). He accordingly wanted to make us feel his displeasure and experience the influence he held over the others, and therefore persuaded his adherents, Il-Mahomed and Khan Haldi, to accept nothing from us, and to avoid coming near us even. We soon, however, pacified him by intimating that we would not give any more rewards without his consent. Meanwhile one of the Chiefs rejected his present, as being of too little value. Ponomarev gave him a fresh one, but when the others saw this, they also all demanded more costly gifts, and even a ragged Mulla had the presumption to return his portion to us with signs of displeasure. Ponomarev now lost patience, and abused them roundly. That turned out to be the true way of restoring order, for tranquillity re-appeared in the Ahl directly.

30th August.—When the wind fell a little we started back to the corvette, and got on board after a four hours' sail. Kiat alone came with us, for he would permit no one to accompany him and share his pretended labours, probably from dread lest he should lose for himself some portion of the rewards and distinctions which he looked forward to from our Government.

31st August.—We weighed anchor, but had to spend the day in tacking backwards and forwards. Kiat informs me that the Turcomans dwelling to the south of the Bay of Balkan, both along the coast and in the interior of the steppe, are divided into three tribes, *viz.*, Yomuds, Takkas, and Kioklans. The last named tribe (Kioklan) is distinguished for its predatory habits, and will often fall upon the Yomuds themselves and carry off their property. These two tribes have, consequently, been at war for a long time, having enjoyed peace only during Sultan Khan's days. The predatory Takkas were quelled by the Khan of Khiva in 1813, when he marched through their territory against the Persians with an army of 30,000 men. The name Yomud is derived from a patriarch of that name, who had three wives. The first bore him two sons, *viz.*, Juni and Sharab, the second bore him Kujuk, and the third Baim Shah. From these four sons



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sprang the four chief clans of the Yomud tribe, each clan distinguishing itself by the name of its founder. These four clans live together in the closest bonds of union, and afford each other mutual protection. The first and second (Juni and Sharab) are particularly remarkable for the closeness of their relations. These two tribes number about 15,000 families, the third (Kujuk) 8,000, and the fourth (Bairam Shah) 14,000. As just mentioned, these clans are closely allied with one another, but the Bairam Shah clan has an extraneous alliance with Khiva. Each clan has its particular Chieftain. Hojam Kuli Bey is the Chief of the Sharab tribe, but the Cazi is Mahomed Tagan.

This individual stands high in the eyes of the Yomuds, partly by reason of his ancient family, and partly because his forefathers have always filled the office. The Yomuds graze their herds in summer on the banks of the Atrek and Giurgen; in winter they inhabit the country about the Ak-Tapa and further in the interior. The Chief of the Junis is Nadir Khan; he lives in Atta Bai, where also dwells the Cazi by name Dowlat Murad. The Kujuk Chieftain is Ana Wardi Khan, but he has fled to Khiva. The Cazi of this clan is dead, and no successor has been appointed to his office. The Bairam Shah Chief is Mang Ali Sirdar; he also, with many of his clan, has fled to Khiva.

In time of need the tribe of Yomud can place 30,000 men in the field, but hardly a thousand of these are properly armed. I asked Kiat about the Gulf of Karabogass, which is said to absorb the waters of the Caspian, and he assured me that that was the belief of the Turcomans.

1st September.—To-day we were becalmed, and had to anchor opposite the Green Hill. The latter is conical in form, and has three times the diameter at the base that it has at the summit. There is a chasm on this hill similar to that on the Ak-Tapa (White Hill), from which salt water is thrown up having a very pungent smell. The Turcomans call the Green Hill "Bartlauk" or "Hios Bartlauk," i.e. sky-blue. A little to the south of this hill, and quite by the sea-side, there stands an old mosque called "Mama Kuss," or Maiden's breast. From the Silver Hill to Hassan Kuli the distance is 33 miles; from Hassan Kuli to Ak-Tapa (White Hill) 20 miles; and from the latter to the Green Hill 25 and a half miles.

2nd September.—Towards noon we sighted Naphtha Island: the Island of Agurchin was on our larboard, but we



could not distinguish it by reason of its low beach and the distance which intervened. I found the latitude to be $39^{\circ} 10' 20''$ N. at the entrance to the bay south-east of Naphtha Island. The latter island as well as the before-mentioned hills to the eastward have the appearance at a distance of great yellow heights. In Count Voinovitsh's work, quoted before, these islands are very well and exhaustively described and their position correctly given in the appended map. In those days Dervish was still a separate island, lying southward of Naphtha Island Point, but for 15 years it has formed one with the latter, probably owing to volcanic agency. In the afternoon we anchored about five miles from the Ahl on the south side of Naphtha Island. Ponomarev and I visited the Ahl, which, however, consists of only 15 Kibitks (families), who have been settlers here for long. The people support themselves by traffic in naphtha and salt, which they sell to the Turcomans of Hassan Kuli and the Silver Hill district. The naphtha springs lie on the other side of the island, which is also inhabited. The islanders say that, all told, they may aggregate 100 families. They all belong to the Sharab tribe. The island possesses only four wells, the water of which is pretty good, but slightly brackish.

In the middle of Naphtha Island there are several patches of pasture land, which support camels and sheep, but the people have no horned cattle. An insignificant wood supplies sufficient fuel for the winter, which, according to them, is very rigorous here. The landing-place by the Ahl affords good shelter to the Turcomans' small craft, as it is protected by a tongue of land running parallel to the east shore. In the roads large ships can lie in perfect security, as there are good anchorages everywhere. Some of the islanders remembered Count Voinovitsh (as far back as 1782), whom they styled "Count Khan."

3rd September.—At daybreak we weighed anchor and steered S. S. W. for the strait between the islands of Dervish and Agurchin or Aidak.

The depth of water was very varying. As we had an adverse wind night overtook us before we had made much way, so we anchored opposite Agurchin. We observed a pillar on the north side of the island, which, according to Kiat, consisted of four trees, each 18 feet high, tied together, and had been erected 10 years before to the memory of a Dervish who once dwelt here and had made the pilgrimage to Mecca. This is now the Turcoman burial place, and the monument



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serves as a guide for people coming from a distance. In summer Agurchin is left uninhabited, save by flocks of sheep, which graze about without shepherds. In winter a few families occupy the island, which contains no fresh water whatever, so the people are constrained to make use of the frozen seawater, which, on becoming ice, loses all its acrid and salt taste. The wood supply is sufficient for all requirements in the way of fuel. The Turcomans assert that, in summer time here, the wild goats (Jairani) go from two to three months without water. It is difficult to give credence to this, although one thing is certain, that there is neither a drop of salt or fresh water in the interior. Is it not, then, probable that these animals allay their thirst by means of the morning dew, which is frequently very heavy in this place? Our original intention was to have passed through the strait dividing Dervish and Agurchin, but this was frustrated by the insufficient depth of water, so we resolved to round Agurchin to the southward.

6th September.—We now steered for the Gulf of Krasnavoda, and anchored in 11 fathoms at a distance of eight and a half miles from Naphtha Island.

7th September.—When day broke the Krasnavoda Mountains were in sight. We weighed anchor, but were immediately assailed by a violent gale from the east, which drove us far out to sea.

8th September.—We ran into the sound between the Cape of Krasnavoda and Naphtha Island, and made out the Balkan range, so called from its highest peak, which starts up abruptly from the eastern side of the bay. This mountain chain extends all round the bay. The wind did not permit us at first to go along the western shore, so as to let me land at the "Oog" rock, from which point Kiat recommended I should start for Khiva, and we only arrived off it by evening. Count Voinovitch's narrative, in general very correct, makes out that there is a sand-bank here covered in some places by only two feet of water, but this is not now the case, for we found a depth of over 3 fathoms right up to the beach. This discrepancy is probably due to the same earthquake which converted Cheleken (Naphtha Island) and Dervish into one island. The mountains on the northern shore of the Bay of Balkan present a yellowish appearance, and conspicuous among them are two rocky heights of a perfectly black colour.

10th September.—In the forenoon we entered the Bay of Krasnavoda, and anchored 1,500 yards from land in three



fathoms. All along the coast there are pasture lands and springs of fresh water, just like on Krasnavoda Point, which has an abundance of excellent drinking water. This promontory afforded us protection from the violence of the sea, like a breakwater. The northern shore of the Balkan Bay is lofty, and consists partly of high rocks. On the tongue of land there are several Yurts, and a population of about 50 Turcoman families; it is nine miles in length by three across. As ships find a secure harbour in this bay, it seemed better adapted for the site of our projected fort than any of the places we had hitherto examined. The necessary wood is obtainable from Cheleken and Darji, and, indeed, the inhabitants assert that timber is to be found on the heights of the Balkan range also. On arrival we immediately sent Kiat ashore to get hold of somebody who would accompany me on my journey to Khiva; we then landed in a body, and refreshed ourselves at a well hewn out of the rock.

12th September.—At daybreak I landed, and, going with my gun into the hills, succeeded in making a fair bag of snipe. The hills which here form the coast line are very steep, and consist of masses of a friable rock, which crumbles under the feet, rendering one's ascent by no means easy. From the heights one has a glorious and extensive view of the whole country round. Our ship lay at anchor opposite a cape; the latter is intersected by two rocky ridges, not very lofty, between which runs a level valley south-eastwards to the sea and south-westwards to the Krasnavoda promontory. On the other side of this valley there is a rocky declivity, forming the boundary to the mighty steppe stretching away towards Khiva.

14th September.—The most eminent Chiefs of the Turcomans inhabiting the shores of the Bay of Balkan now assembled on board the corvette. These were Mulla Kaib, Hakim Ali Bey, Meer Said (from Hassan Kuli), Niyaz Bulad Bey, Mahomed Mizaz Margan, Tagan Niyaz, and Kyal Yarshik, the owner of the well opposite to where we anchored. They stayed on board all day, and only left us late in the evening. Ponomarev and I went ashore and gave the Chiefs an entertainment, which they repaid by showing us some wrestling, shooting, and the like. No business was done with the Chiefs on this day; only Kiat exerted himself in endeavours to bring them into the humour to accept our proposals. He named a trustworthy man, my "Jarvidar" *

* Sarwadar (ساروارد) is the Turkish for a guide.



to Khiva, but the individual himself would not agree, so Kiat sent for another man, by name Said, who arrived on the following day.

15th September.—To-day Kiat re-appeared on board the corvette with all the Chiefs, who, by way of signing the agreement, smudged their fingers with ink and smeared them on the paper. Mulla Kaib at the same time confirmed and ratified their joint consent, whereupon the allotted presents were distributed among them.

Meanwhile I was making terms with Said, who was willing to start for Khiva on the 21st September (according to their reckoning the 12th of the month "Sulhaji"). He agreed to take me to my destination and to bring me back for 40 ducats, whereupon I advanced him half of that sum as a "handsel."

17th September.—I went on shore to purchase a horse for the Khiva trip. They brought me, however, such a wretched animal, old and small, that I would hardly have given two ducats for it; still they had the effrontery to ask me 20. I therefore determined to do without a horse altogether, and to make the long journey on a camel instead.



CHAPTER II.

Journey to Khiva and stay in that Khanate.

17th September.—I was now ready for the journey to Khiva, and set out on it, furnished with two letters to the Khan—one from the Governor-General, Alexis Petrovitsh Jermalof, the other from Major Ponomarev. The contents of the former were as follows:—"The Governor of Astraccan and Georgia, provinces of the world-renowned, most powerful, and most prosperous Russian nation, and of all the inhabitants of the country from the shores of the Black Sea to the borders of the Caspian, tenders friendliest greetings to His Highness the illustrious Ruler of the province of Khiva, and wishes him long life and much happiness. He has the honor to intimate that by means of the trade which brings the people of Khiva to Astraccan he has for long been acquainted with His Highness' subjects, members of a race brilliantly famous not only for valour, but also for magnanimity and a noble intellect. Much rejoicing, moreover, at the wide-spreading fame of His Highness' great worth, deep wisdom, and distinguished virtues, the undersigned yearns earnestly for a more intimate acquaintance with His Highness, and longs to establish friendly relations with that august personage, wherefore, as a consequence of this address, indited in an hour favoured by Heaven, in that it opens the gate of friendship and harmony between us, he cherishes the pleasing hope that in future, by virtue of these sentiments and their reciprocity on the part of His Highness and His Highness' subjects, the happy path shall be opened up by which the great advantages of Russian trade may be enjoyed and eternal peace and unity be founded on genuine faith and loyalty between the two nations.

"The bearer of this, who has also been charged with verbal messages by the undersigned, will have the honor personally to assure His Highness how desirous the undersigned is to make up a fair bouquet of mutual alliance from the garden of friendship with His Highness, which bouquet shall be firmly bound together by an uninterrupted peace. It will further be the bearer's duty to report, on his return, the reception that shall have been accorded him, and the sentiments



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entertained by His Highness, so that the undersigned may know if he is to have the pleasure, next year also, of sending an envoy with friendly tokens, and charged with the assurance of deepest regard.

"In conclusion, he prays that God may lengthen His serene Highness' days, and bless him with glory and prosperity. He has the honor to be His Highness' obedient well-wisher.

"JERMALOF,

"General of Infantry."

Copy of Major Ponomarev's letter.

"Long life to the serene, illustrious, and renowned Governor of the province of Khiva.

"Alexis Petrovitsh Jermalof, Governor of Astraccan and Georgia, dependencies of the mighty and prosperous Russian Empire, and Ruler over all the races dwelling between the Black Sea and the Caspian, being desirous of establishing commercial relations with the Turcoman inhabitants of the Caspian shores, has sent me to that people. These relations will be all the more firmly established if your Excellency entertain ideas on the subject similar to those of our Governor-General. Then the people, who are most deserving of protection from both sides, shall indeed be blest, and this end will be the easier attained if your Highness' subjects receive your permission to carry their merchandize through the Turcoman territory down to the Bay of Balkan, whither also the Russian traders will repair. By this course the caravans will reach Astraccan in a shorter time, and will enjoy immunity from the robberies and extortions of the Kirgis Kazaks, which they have now so often to submit to on their journey through the country of that tribe.

"The Russian nation having for long been acquainted with Khiva, and friendship having always existed between the two powers, it seemed expedient to the Governor-General to send Nicholas Muraviev as ambassador to your serene Highness, in order to declare the deep respect which he entertains for you, the illustrious Ruler of the Khiva Khanate. At the same time the envoy is commissioned to discuss by word of mouth sundry matters with your Highness. With much gladness I hasten to despatch the envoy, and whilst I express through him my profound respect for your Highness, I am



at the same time animated by the sincere desire that during the auspicious days of your illustrious reign our mutual friendly relations may be more firmly bound together by a garland of roses which shall never fade, and may be celebrated in the thrilling song of melodious nightingales from the kingdom of consolation and heavenly joy.

“I have the honor to be,

“Your Highness’ most obedient servant.

“PONOMAREV, *Major.*”

18th September.—I passed this night in one of two Kibitks on the shore with the elder Kyal Yarshik Sufi : our chaplain, Lieutenant Linitzki, and Midshipman Juriev, accompanied me.

19th September.—On this day I commenced my journey, and left the sea-coast behind me. My guide Said, who lived by the spring of Suji Kabil, had sent me 4 camels by one of his relatives, named Abul Hossein, and with these and two horses in addition I struck into the steppe. I had only my servant and Petrovitsh, the interpreter, with me, but I made up for the deficiency in men by a good gun, a pair of pistols, and a large dagger, all of which I never had off my person once during the entire journey. Petrovitsh was always ready and willing, faithful to me and of good heart. His outward man was certainly not prepossessing, but he often cheered me, even in the most gloomy moments, by his comical humour. Kiat and Takan Niyaz accompanied me to Said’s dwelling-place. When I reached the summit of the mountain range forming the coast line of the Bay of Balkan, the great steppe through which ran my path lay at my feet, a vast sandy flat with scanty patches of bush here and there. There are some salt water springs not far from the coast, round which the Turcomans have set up their Yurts.

Nowhere does vegetation or grass meet the eye, and nevertheless herds of camels and sheep wander all about, feeding on the dry bushes with which the steppe is thinly studded. The careless and inert Turcomans buy their necessary grain in Astrabad or Khiva, living for the most entirely on camel’s milk. Plundering is their only trade. They way-lay Persian travellers at Astrabad and sell them as slaves

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in Khiva, often for very high sums. Here I rode up to see my acquaintance Mulla Kaib, and was entertained with camel's milk. Further along the road I came to pasture land bordered by some insignificant hills, belonging probably to the Balkan range. Before evening I reached Said's abode. This village ("Oba") is inhabited by Turcomans of the Kulta family, who are descended from Jafir Bey, a scion of the Sharab clan (Yomuds and one of the two principal Turcoman tribes). These Turcoman races are scattered over the whole of the steppe from the Caspian Sea to well nigh the Chinese frontier. They are split into numerous small septs, each having a Chief of its own selection, whose orders are obeyed, or, rather, who commands deference by reason of his age, his past plundering exploits, or his wealth. The "Oba" Suji Kabil contains about 50 dwelling-places and three springs of good fresh water. It is 17 miles eastwards from the sea. I put up with Said, who treated me most cordially.

20th September.—This whole day I had to pass in Suji Kabil, for the Mullas declared that we must not start until the 21st, which they considered to be an auspicious day, and all endeavours to get my guides away were, consequently, futile. Afterwards I discovered that the elder of the Kalta tribes had been anxious to persuade Said into not accompanying me. The cause of this was his friendship for Hakim Ali Bey, the elder of the Kirind Shik tribe, whose brother had at first offered to accompany me for 100 ducats, instead of which I had closed with Said for 40. In spite of all the means of persuasion employed, Said remained true to his word, and, contrary to the expectation of all his friends, he received me into his house. This unusual behaviour, so antagonistic to the mean principles on which the Turcomans frame their actions, as a rule, was due to the offices of Kiat, who availed himself of his personal influence to help me, in the hope that he might forward his own ends with our Government on my safe return. He had therefore talked over Said into accompanying me, and directly after my arrival at Suji Kabil, he twice visited the before-mentioned elder in his Yurt. In considering his character, Said is one of the best Turcomans I ever knew. His manners were, indeed, rough and uncouth, and he was rather dull, but he was also firm, determined, and intrepid, a good horseman, and renowned for his plundering raids into Persia. His actions were often so contradictory, that one could hardly conceive them to emanate from one and the same



person. When he was 16 years old he rode with his aged father into the field. On the third day's journey from their Yurt they suddenly came on a band of horsemen belonging to the hostile tribe of Takka.

The father was well mounted, but the son had a sorry nag. As there appeared no means of escape the old man dismounted, and, handing over his horse to the son, said—"Said, I am old, and have lived long enough; thou art young, and canst maintain the family, save thyself, and farewell. As for me I die here." Said replied as he drew his sword—"If thou wilt not save thyself, come on; we shall die together, and the children shall be orphans, for I am resolved to fight like a man." With these words he also sprang from his horse. Time and the nearness of the enemy forbade further dispute, so they sought safety in flight, and urged their horses until night fell and enabled them to elude their pursuers. When they reached home the father declared in presence of the whole tribe that his son far surpassed him in valour. I found the character of these Turcomans of the desert much superior to that of the dwellers by the sea, and think this is due to the former not having experience of the knavery practised by the traders who annually bring their wares to the coast. Kiat seized the opportunity now of asking me for gifts for Hakim Ali Bey and Ana Durda, two Chiefs who were travelling with me to Khiva, but entirely on their own business. Before starting I made some small presents to Said's wife and the wives of the other men whom he had hired to accompany us.

I wrote a letter to Ponomarev from Suji Kabil.

21st September.—At daybreak I left Suji Kabil, riding on a large and powerful camel, which I had great difficulty in sticking to when it rose to its feet from the kneeling posture. The caravan consisted of 17 camels, belonging to four different individuals bound for Khiva to buy grain. The principal personage among them was Said, the next his cousin, Abul Hossein, the third Kulji, and the last Ak Nafas. The whole team followed the leader in a long string,* each camel being tied to the one in front of him. After going on for

* On the leading camel sat Fatima, by birth a Kurd, and formerly Said's father's concubine. She had been 12 years his slave, and now, wishing to improve her lot, begged her master to sell her in Khiva. On his refusal to part with her, she threatened to commit suicide; so he gave in. It is incredible what this woman endured on the road. Clothed only in rags, she led the caravan day and night, hardly slept or ate, and, when we halted, attended to the camels, cooked her master's food, &c.



17 miles we halted towards noon, and united ourselves to the caravan led by Hakim Ali Bey. The further inland we proceeded, the more our caravan increased in numbers owing to our being joined every now and then by single Turcomans who lived by the side of the road, so that by the third day, when we found ourselves in the perfectly barren portion of the steppe, our numbers had swollen to something like 200 camels and 40 men. The quarrel between Hakim Ali Bey and Said did not affect me. We rode apart, and took up our night quarters in separate places. My caravan was well armed, and if, as I suspect, Hakim Ali Bey started with the intention of robbing us, he was certainly only deterred by fear of our superior weapons. He never greeted me, but would sit apart with his companions before his fire, talking contemptuously of us; nevertheless on one occasion I managed to alienate some of his people through the medium of tea, for which all Turcomans have a passion. Perhaps an additional motive for Hakim Ali Bey's avoiding me lay in his dread of an unfavourable reception from the Khan of Khiva on my account. Whatever the cause may have been, I never was off my guard, and never laid aside my arms once during the 16 days and nights we were in the steppe.

In the afternoon we reached a small eminence called Kasil Aiyag, which is probably an offshoot from the Balkan chain. We pursued our way 17 miles further, then halted for the night, having to our left rear the Yurts clustered round the Siulman well. During the whole journey I suffered less from the unpleasant jolting and the unaccustomed ride on camel-back than from the terrible *ennui*, for I found myself alone without a soul to talk to. The heat was great, but not intolerable. The steppe presented a most dreary aspect, a very picture of death, or depopulation caused by some mighty convulsion of nature. Not an object betrayed signs of life; no grass nor verdure refreshed the eye: only here and there a stunted patch of bush struggled for existence in the sand. Then to add to my depression came thoughts of the distance between me and my home, and of the risk I ran of falling into captivity and perpetual slavery. Dreadful pictures which haunted me throughout the whole journey! I was dressed like a Turcoman, and went by the Turkish name of Murad Beg, which saved me from much inquisitive questioning, for, although all the caravan people knew who I really was, I was always taken for a Turcoman of the Jafir Bey tribe by the strangers we met *en route*. Our course lay due



east. To-day's eclipse of the moon lasted over an hour, and discomposed the Turcomans not a little.

They asked me the cause of the eclipse, declared that the moon was only darkened in this manner at the death of one of their Chiefs or elders, and suggested that the omen augured ill for our reception at Khiva. I now perceived that I must enlighten them as to their mistaken notions, and the case of the wise man of old occurred to my memory, who on a similar occasion replied by throwing his cloak over the head of the enquirer. I did this to Said, and asked him if he saw the fire beaming before him; on his saying no, I sought to explain the movements of the heavenly bodies and how one comes at times to obscure the other. The Turcomans did not understand me at first, as they thought I included all the stars, but at last it came home to their comprehension, and they said—"Yes; you are truly an Ambassador, a chosen man, for you are not only acquainted with the affairs of earth, but also know what is going on in the heavens." Their astonishment increased when I indicated to them which edge of the moon would first emerge from the shadow.

22nd September.—We started at 1 A.M.; night cold, dew heavy. After going 20 miles we arrived at dawn at the Siuli well, where there are 20 Yurts. This well is 15 fathoms deep; water nauseous, but drinkable. There is a large burial-ground here. The grave-stones appear to me to be made of limestone: they are fairly large, well cut, and ornamented to a certain extent. I am inclined to attribute their origin to the Turcomans. The inhabitants say that this cemetery is very old, and that the same kind of stone is to be found on the sea-coast. I wrote a second time to Ponomarev from this place, and entrusted the letter to Ashar Mahomed, a man who had accompanied me thus far. We continued our march for 11 miles further, always going due east, and then halted. To our right appeared the Balkan range, on whose slopes there is said to be good pasturage and water supply. We certainly saw many horses grazing there.

23rd September.—At midnight we resumed our course, and, after getting over 17 miles, arrived at the well of Damurjam a little after sunrise. The well lies a little off the road to the right, and about 40 families graze their herds here. On the road opposite this pasturage there is another well, called Yassak Jam, which caravans, however, do not stop at, as its water is brackish. The well of Damurjam is situated in a depression of the ground, quite level and surrounded by banks,

which looks as if this were the dried-up bed of a lake formerly existing here. As I had hardly closed my eyes for two whole days and nights I dismounted from my camel, and, while the beasts were being fed, sank into a profound sleep. On awaking I found myself surrounded by women and children, all taking careful stock of me. In order to divert my mind a little I tried to read, and this certainly did me good, and cheered me up in this desolate waste, where only the rising and setting sun and the moon claimed my attention, and served as signals to the caravan for rest or toil. There was no growth of any kind on the extinct lake bed. At the distance of five and $\frac{3}{4}$ miles from Damurjam we called a halt, but no grass was to be found here. This deprivation did not entail any suffering on our camels, and as we were told that we should not meet with water for several days, we had filled our leather bags at the Damurjam well. Here our caravan received a fresh increase. After two hours' rest we went on 23 miles further in the direction E. N. E. $\frac{1}{4}$ E. From Damurjam I wrote to Ponomarev, enjoining him to keep a sharp eye on the family of Hakim Ali Bey, who excited my suspicion. Our road lay continuously over the bed of a dried-up lake. Eight miles from Damurjam, to the right, we saw the Yurts by the well of Haroidan, the water of which is exceptionally good. It is curious that the water all over this steppe should not be of the same quality, but so it is, and close to salt water a perfectly fresh spring will often be struck. Several of the wells about here are 40 fathoms deep, and have their sides strengthened with beams, but the people cannot say who sank them. Before midnight we took the road again, and, having covered 23 miles in the direction E. by N., halted before sunrise. After going about five miles we saw a great lake, called by the Turcomans "Kuli Dariya," or Aji Kuyusi. It extends 57 miles from north to south, and is connected with the Gulf of Karabogass.

It appears that this great water is as little known to geographers as the Gulf of Karabogass, which has not yet been explored by any navigator from the evil reputation it bears for whirlpools. The Turcomans take their craft, indeed, with perfect safety all along the shores of this gulf for the seal fishery, but they have never yet dared to enter the mouth of the Kuli Dariya, and mention its name with mysterious awe. They say—"Why should we venture up it? The animals all fear to drink from it, for its waters are bitter and deadly; why, not even a fish lives in it." According to them



the Kuli Dariya absorbs the waters of the Caspian, for the current from the latter into the Karabogass Gulf is extraordinarily strong. The Kuli Dariya decreases in a very marked manner, and traces of its former limits are visible far in the interior of the steppe. Its northern shore is rocky. A belief obtains among the people that all birds flying across this lake are struck blind. Not far from the spot where we halted a road runs on the left hand along the side of the Kuli Dariya to Mangushlak, and where the two roads meet, we saw a great burial-place, with stones similar to those at Siuli. According to the inhabitants these are the tombs of some Yomuds who were slain here in one of the Kirgis Kazaks' raids.

24th September.—At sunrise we started, and halted after a stretch of 23 miles on nearly the highest point of the Sare Baba range, running from north to south. We had to cross a number of deep fissures and chasms, formed probably by the torrents which fall into the Kuli Dariya. This neighbourhood is called Bahljaringri. The road was of limestone, and in the most execrable state. For the first 11 miles it was a steady and gentle ascent, but the Sare Baba range was visible from much further off. We suffered much at this night's halting-place, for a high wind drove the sand over us; the cold was very considerable, and we had difficulty in finding enough sticks to make a small fire with. Before midnight we were on the move again, and soon got down from the heights. The road is, indeed, very steep, but so regular as to resemble the handiwork of man instead of a natural track. On the highest point of this range there is a mound called "Kur," where a strong wind always blows. Here stands a monument in honor of one of the Turcoman patriarchs by name Ar Sare Baba. His numerous descendants, a tribe formerly established on the shores of the Bay of Balkan, have now settled in Bokhara. Ar Sare Baba is said to have lived long ago, and to have been distinguished for his many virtues and great learning. As he wished to be buried on the summit near the high road, so that passers-by might pray for him, he gave this mountain his own name. His monument consists of a pole, to which are attached some coloured rags, and round it is a cairn of stones, stags' antlers, and potsherds. The latter offering is contributed by all passing Turcomans, even those who belong to other tribes. No one dares to desecrate this grave. Quite close to the latter there is an old burial-ground. We had scarcely got down from this height when it seemed as if we

had arrived in quite a different climate. The air was soft and mild, and the road ran through deep sand, which, however, was not quite destitute of vegetation.

25th September.—At length, on the 25th, at 3 A.M., after a 20 miles' ride, we arrived at the well of Tuar. Our course had been east by north. Not far from the well, to the right of the road, we saw some Yurts of the Atta tribe, which formerly stood actually by the well. As this tribe is a small one, and is often harassed by its neighbours, it seeks protection from the Khan of Khiva. Its members seldom venture on plundering expeditions, as they are so widely scattered, but for all that, they are not the less predatory in their tendencies or actions when a favourable opportunity arises. They differ from the other Turcomans very widely in costume, and more particularly in feature; indeed, their customs and mode of living generally have little in common with the other tribes. They cannot number more than 1,000 Kibitks. In my opinion, this tribe must be an offshoot from those races which populate the country known to us as Tartary. At Tuar there are six wells of good water, but the neighbourhood is barren, and, except just by the foot of the mountain, we had not seen a blade of grass, or a shrivelled bush, the whole way. Not far from here there is a neat stone monument in honor of Jaffir Bey, one of the former Yomud Chieftains, whose clan is the most warlike and numerous of all; it boasts nearly 2,000 families, and maintains a certain pre-eminence among the other sections of the great tribes. My guide Said belonged to this section, and seemed, like the other members of it, proud of his descent. There are two roads from Tuar to Khiva; the natural one goes straight on, but it has two drawbacks, *viz.*, it is not well off for water, and it runs nearer than could be desired to the Yurts of the Takka tribe, who are a most violent and unscrupulous set, always at war with their neighbours. Raids from the one side or the other are almost incessant, and the Yomud caravans are frequently plundered by the Takkas, although the latter are also Turcomans. The scarcity of water is in winter made up for by snow. In the summer time caravans of horses only take this route. The other road goes off to the left, and bends round to the north-east. It is a longer route by two days than the first mentioned one, but has a better water supply, and is less dangerous. Notwithstanding the latter consideration, Said loaded his firearms at Tuar, and advised me to do the same to mine.



We rode nearly 34 miles north by east. The steppe is here a little undulating. Hakim Ali Bey continued to treat me most discourteously, and although we were all in imminent danger of being attacked by robbers, he would never wait for me, so that we might be all together. I did not, however, solicit him on this point, as I knew I had little support to look for from him in the hour of need; in fact, I remained further and further apart from him. At night, however, I took all necessary precautionary measures. Once some of the people of his caravan came to me and urged me for safety's sake to join them. I replied—"If you are afraid, you had better join me." They said nothing more, and went away. Nevertheless one of his associates attached himself to my caravan with a servant and 16 camels, perhaps attracted by my tea, but more probably (as he remained with me the whole day) in the hope of receiving a considerable reward from me, which, however, I did not bestow. I succeeded in seducing him as well as his comrades from Hakim Ali Bey, but my only motive was thereby to secure good informants when we should reach Khiva, who would keep me *au fait* with regard to Hakim Ali Bey's intentions, and his reports about me to the Khan, in case he should endeavour to revenge himself on Said through that agency. As he had noticed that I kept a diary and entered my remarks on the road, he was the first to inform the Khan of this circumstance. Before midnight we again started. The country was a little hilly. After a 17 miles' march we arrived before daybreak of the 26th at the well "Dirin."

26th September.—This well is situated in a low valley, and is faced with stone, but still the water is foul and brackish. We had, however, to fill our water bags with it, such as it was, for the steppe in front of us was entirely destitute of any water whatsoever. Dirin may be considered as the limit of the country, occupied by the sea-coast Turcomans, for at a distance of 2,000 paces from this well, on the left hand, is the last grazing ground of the Baga Yomuds, consisting of 50 Yurts. From this place to the Besh Dishik well, which formerly marked the Khiva frontier, the road runs uninterruptedly for five or six days' journey through a barren desert. This is the most trying portion of the whole journey from Balkan to Khiva. The Dirin valley has steep banks, and is the bed of a river that in former times flowed from north to south, probably that branch of the Amu Dariya called the Oxus by the ancients. Water and vegetation are wanted to

enliven this fine tract of country. Nature is dead, and seems unwilling ever to permit verdure to appear in this home of brute-like men. Hakim Ali Bey now rejoined me with his caravan, and greeted me again for the first time. He said—"I do not carry my faith on the tongue, like your companions, but in the heart;" whereupon I turned my back on him and vouchsafed no reply. Many Turcomans now began to offer their services to intimate my approach to the Khan of Khiva, but knowing their untrustworthiness I rejected them all. At 10 A.M. we again set out, and halted after going 17 miles over a flat steppe. Starting the same night, we had gone 29 miles by sunrise the following day: our course lay at first to the N. E., then due E., then E. by N. On the way we came upon a small caravan travelling from Khiva. I availed myself of the opportunity to send Ponomarev a letter by Mahomed Niyaz, giving him news of my well-being and begging him to secure Hakim Ali Bey's son in case of anything untoward happening to me.

27th September.—Marching at 8 A.M. to-day, we did 25 miles. After three hours we passed the well Kasagli on our right, the water of which is salt and undrinkable.

28th September.—From the 27th to the evening of the 28th we left 51 miles behind us, but nothing on the road attracted my attention. I was only oppressed by the most deadly *ennui*. After two hours' rest we went on 23 miles further, in the direction E. by N., and halted at daybreak.

29th September.—On the 29th we had pretty cold weather. After doing another 28 miles we encamped by the well "Besh Dishik," or five openings. Our course had been E. by N. Here the water was excellent. It was a comforting reflection to me that two-thirds of the journey were now over, and that I was actually in the Khan's territory. Still more I rejoiced when it turned out there was to be a halt to-day. I had now been 10 days on the tramp, had suffered much from the bumping on the camel, had often been obliged to go on foot, and had hardly had any sleep during all this time. To the Turcomans this kind of travelling is less fatiguing, for they are able to stretch themselves at length on their camels and sleep—a feat which I could not accomplish. Here, too, for the first time I tasted some cooked food, having had nothing since we started, save black biseuit and brackish water. Our road had been through loose sand, and we had in front of us at first a wall of lofty and precipitous rocks seamed with great fissures. My companions said that this



wall had formerly been sea-coast. We had only a distance of eight and a half miles between us and the well, when we were brought up by a great dry river bed, say 400 yards across and 60 yards deep. The banks were very steep, and these as well as the bed itself were covered with bushes. The course of the river bed was from N. E. to S. W. Our route would naturally have been straight across, but the precipitous nature of the banks forbade of this. We had therefore to turn to the left and go along the top of the bank, picking our way through sand hummocks 12 feet high. When we had got abreast of the Sare Kamush well, which is sunk in the river bed, we met a caravan, and I took the opportunity of again letting Ponomarev hear from me.

We had to go five and a half miles along the bank before we could descend it and make good our way to the well "Besh Dishik" for night quarters. The rocky wall, or so-called ancient 'coast' before mentioned, runs parallel with this extinct river at a distance from it of 3,000 paces. The features of this ravine, winding in all the usual curves and bends of a river through a level steppe, led me to conclude that this must be the old course of the Amu Dariya, which Peter the Great had been at such pains to have explored. My companions confirmed this, saying that, though the ravine was now called Uss Bey, a river called "Amu Dariya" used formerly to run through it down to the Bay of Balkan. This river, they said, had long since altered its course, and now ran northwards out of the Khanate of Khiva on the "Demar Kazak" side. On my return from Khiva, Kiat informed me that the mouth of this old river bed, although choked with sand, is still distinguishable on the Caspian, and that by it there stands a hut (isba) constructed on the Russian plan. No one knows who the builder of this was, but the neighbouring Turcomans are restrained from demolishing it by superstitious dread. Its existence probably dates back to the time of Prince Bekovitsh, whom Peter the Great sent hither to search for gold dust. It is quite possible that the hut may have stood for so long a time without tumbling to pieces, as very little rain falls here, and the ignorance of the present people of the Balkan as to its origin is probably to be accounted for by the former nomadic inhabitants having belonged to a different tribe. The nature of the dry bed of Amu Dariya, where it is not covered by sand drift, differs widely from that of the steppe, for it is clothed with grass and trees, and contains wells of good

spring water. The overflow of the Sare Kamush well, before referred to, runs on, forming a tiny rivulet in place of the quondam river. Beside this well stands another, the water of which is brackish, where, as in our night station, I counted six wells of good drinking water. From this place onwards the route runs pretty uninterruptedly through vegetation, from the dearth of which we had suffered some six or seven times. I was much astonished here to find myself cordially met by my Hakim Ali Bey and his brother, Tagan Ali, and to see them attending to my camels. The former, moreover, actually asked my forgiveness for having kept away from me hitherto, assured me that he would make up for past faults and do his best to serve me, and protested that I might rely on him more surely than on my most trusty servant. I accepted his advances in a friendly manner and entertained him with tea, but trusted him less than ever, and took extraordinary measures of precaution on this night. I account for this sudden change as follows :— He found he was not in a position to carry out his evil designs, whatever they were, and reflecting that I had now nearly accomplished the journey to Khiva in safety, he determined that it would be better to make up matters, so as to benefit himself through my agency with the Khan, supposing that personage to receive me favourably. Besides this, he heard from the caravans we met that the speedy arrival of a Russian Envoy was talked of in Khiva, and that the Ruler himself was in a great state of impatience for me, and the four camel-loads of gold being sent him by the Ak Padshah (White King), by which he meant the Czar. The rumour of my intended visit had been spread by the Turcomans who had gone to Khiva from the Atrek and Giurgen Rivers, and who had drawn their conclusion from the enquiries about the Khiva route which I had been making in their district.

For the matter of that, I had never made any secret of my project. From Besh Dishik we had several marches without water before us.

30th September.—At daybreak we broke up camp, marched 17 miles, and halted after sunset. There was much attract attention and court speculation on this portion of the road. We were now on the further side of the former Amu Dariya, at no great distance from the river bed, whilst on our left hand a precipitous wall of rock (the supposed ancient coast alluded to before) stretched away into the far



distance, presenting throughout a most strange appearance. The elevated plateau beyond this line of cliffs was perfectly analogous to the lower steppe which we were travelling over. For about an hour our road ran parallel to the precipice, and we diverted ourselves with the echo from it, which repeated each word distinctly several times over. In the rock, opposite the point where the road turns off to the right, there are five apertures, hewn out with great regularity, looking like the entrances to a house. My fellow-travellers told me that these five openings were called "Besh Dishik," and that the well by which we had encamped on the previous night derived its name from them. The nomadic Turcomans of the surrounding country are all assured that these apertures are the approaches to vast caverns in which from time immemorial there has dwelt a King with a numerous family, countless treasure, and beauteous daughters, but that once when some inquisitive persons tried to intrude into the caverns, they were immediately seized by an unseen hand and strangled.

When they told me of this I did not like to ask how they could possibly know the fate of the unlucky trespassers, seeing that none of them had ever come back to tell the tale, as the narrative had elicited already many different opinions; when one individual said he did not believe the story at all, another asked him quite seriously—"Whence, then, came that voice that repeated all we said as we rode by the steep rock?" After such an unanswerable argument the doubter did not venture further to gainsay the truth of the story, but lapsed into silence. Meanwhile I became very desirous of exploring the caverns in question, which may, perhaps, have once been the retreat of a band of robbers, so commenced the climb upwards with one of my Turcomans. The caves are more than half way up the rock. A projection juts out from beneath the entrances, and forms a sort of gallery about 400 yards long. The loose soil gave way under my feet and much impeded my ascent, and as I mounted up stones began to fall from overhead. At last I came to a huge rock, threatening to detach itself at any moment, and under this I had to crawl in order to get to the projection whence it seemed easy to gain access to the caves. My Turcoman preceded me and got safely through, but when he reached the gallery he found the bit he stood on isolated from the rest by a gap two fathoms across.

As the caravan had now got far ahead I abandoned my plan, and had to make all haste to overtake the rest. I don't

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know what to make of this line of rock. It does not seem improbable that it may have been the boundary either of the sea or of some vast lake. At some distance from Besh Dishik, on this side of the Amu Dariya, there were a number of canals, destitute of water, but bearing distinct traces of its having been there once.

Our course lay E. by N.

1st October.—On the night of the 30th we again started, and by the morning of the 1st October had gone 29 miles to the S. E. On our way we saw a corresponding shore of the supposed sea. Here also we saw the ruins of the fort "Utin Kila." These canals and ruins furnish incontrovertible evidence to this having once been a populous district, and to the now dried-up Uss Bai having once contained the waters of that great commercial thoroughfare, the Amu Dariya. To-day we marched another 28 miles, passing by many a dry canal and patch of copse.

2nd October.—From the night of the 1st to the morning of the 2nd October we did 25 miles, and halted at sunrise. There are some poisonous plants about here, which my fellow-travellers were very cautious to keep their camels away from. Before daybreak we came on a great Turcoman caravan of the Igdur section of the Chobdur tribe. It consisted of 1,000 camels and 200 men, who went along with a great uproar, singing, laughing, and shouting for joy at leaving Khiva and having purchased their grain at a cheap rate. They were bound for Mangushlak. Hakim Ali Bey had gone on ahead with his caravan, and I had only six Turcomans with me, so, as we met the Igdurs in a narrow part of the road, with jungle on either side, we had to wait until the whole train had passed us before we could proceed. The Igdurs asked my Turcomans what tribe they belonged to, and, crowding round us, discovered by Petrovitsh's cap that he was no Turcoman. They regarded me and my servant with great curiosity and asked what manner of people we were. "These are Russian captives," replied my men; "they came to our coasts with their ships, and we caught three of them, whom we are now going to sell." "Well done," cried the Igdurs with wild, mocking laughter; "off with them, the accursed infidels. We sold three Russians in Khiva this very trip, and got a good sum for them." Starting again we accomplished nearly 29 miles in a S. E. direction, and met a number of other caravans coming back laden with corn from Khiva. We learnt from them that the Khan had laid a fresh impost of $\frac{1}{2}$ Tilla on every Turcoman camel



entering the city. As, however, the Turcomans were very averse to paying this tax, and as they had petitioned for its abolition, the Khan had directed all the camels which had then arrived to be detained, but had promised at the same time to meet the Turcoman leaders at the fortress of Ak Serai in order to listen to their requests and to receive their offerings in person. In spite of this, many caravans had fled, and as it was pretty certain that the Khan must have left Khiva by then we were informed that we should most likely find him at the Ak Serai. This news was most agreeable to me, and gave me the hope of being soon able to accomplish my mission. I therefore composed my address to the Khan, and gave it to Petrovitsh to translate, ordering him at the same time to learn it by heart. But alas! how I deceived myself, how much too sanguine I was! From our yesterday's halting-place roads branched off in every direction to the various pasture lands and villages in the Khiva Khanate. Hakim Ali Bey's large caravan dispersed entirely in quest of grain, but we all remained together: many fires blazed near us, kindled by that class of people who travel into the steppe in their Arabas (carts) to fetch wood or burn charcoal, and who have an evil reputation as robbers. They did not, however, molest us. The sight of the cart ruts rejoiced and comforted me with the thought of being once more in an inhabited country and among my kind. Little did I foresee how soon misery was to overtake me and what my fate was to be.

3rd October.—Starting on the night of the 2nd, we marched 23 miles E. S. E., often through jungle, indeed, not without occasionally missing the road. Towards morning we halted, and afterwards advanced an additional eight and a half miles E. S. E., when we reached a canal to our no small joy, seeing that we had been four days without water. This canal is fed by the modern Amu Dariya, which rises in the mountain range to the north of Hindustan, flows through Bokhara, passes to the east of the city of Khiva, and falls into the Sea of Aral. In the Khanate of Khiva, which has a diameter of over 115 miles, there are numerous canals. By the first canal there is a settlement of Turcomans from different tribes. These people, although living near towns and practising husbandry, are really robbers by trade. No sooner is their harvest over than off they go a plundering to Persia, and dispose of their captives in the Khiva slave market. The villages in Khiva are all situated on canals, between which are intervals of salt

steppe. The land is tilled partly by the people themselves, and partly by their slaves. One can hardly conceive the wonderful fertility of the soil here. Wheat, rice, sesame flourish, and also jogan, a small round grain the size of a little pea and white in colour, growing in thick ears like Indian corn. It is used as forage for the horses, but also as human food. All kinds of fruit thrive in this country, notably melons and water-melons. The melons are often a foot and a half long, and wonderfully sweet. Cattle-breeding is carried on to a great extent. Their domestic cattle comprise camels, cows, and sheep (some of the latter attaining to an extraordinary size). The breed of horses is excellent, but they prize those brought by the Turcomans from the Giurgen and Atrek above their own indigenous animals.

The Turcomans and Khivans who live by raids into Persia spare their horses very little. They generally ride eight days on end, doing 80 miles a day, and watering their beasts for the first time on the fourth day's journey through the parched desert. The "jogan" before mentioned is the sole article of forage, and of this each horseman carries with him enough for the whole trip. We started soon again, and marched steadily on without a halt. In the distance there appeared to be a thick fog enveloping the whole horizon. This turned out, however, to be a mass of dust, borne upwards by the wind just in the very direction we had to go: eyes, nose, mouth, and hair got the full benefit of this. The clouds of dust were so dense that nothing could be distinguished at any distance. We halted two hours before nightfall, whereupon Said went off to the Yurts on one side of the road to look for a night's lodgings for us. The people were Yomud Turcomans of the Kujuk Tatar branch and Quiruk family, under their elder Attan Niyaz Margan. Of all the Turcomans I have ever come across this person pleased me most. He had settled in Khiva and taken service with the Khan; was regarded, however, more in the light of a partizan by the latter. Once a week he rode over to pay his respects to the Khan, and had, indeed, just returned from Khiva when I arrived. His Yurt stood on the Dash Haos canal. He received me with the hospitality that became an honor-loving and generous man, but which one seldom meets with among the Turcomans. He put himself to the greatest trouble to make me comfortable, slaughtered his best sheep, set water before me to wash with, cooked the dinner, and finally drove away the inquisitive idlers who had assembled in numbers to stare at me. He told



me that my early arrival was spoken of in Khiva, wherefore counselled me not to have myself particularly announced in the city, but to ride straight through to the Shah's Court, according to the established custom, and announce myself as guest and envoy, which would ensure my being well received.

I doubted whether such a sudden and unexpected arrival on my part would please the Khan, but thanked my host for his well-meant advice, given sincerely from the benevolence of his heart, determining at the same time to pursue a different course. He now presented his four sons to me, each one handsomer than his brother. They swaggered bravely with their long pistols and fine stallions, gifts from the Khan. His second son was absent, having been despatched by his father with 30 men on a marauding expedition to Astrabad.

4th October.—Refreshed and recruited, we started in the forenoon, my brave host accompanying me for 11 miles. There was no high road or beaten track now. We rode through the steppe (covered with sand hills) lying between the Canals Dash Haos and Ak Serai. The gale still continued, and covered us with sand, overpowering us so that even our host lost the way. Here for the first time I remarked how the wind throws up a sand hill here and levels another there, and how the sand, beginning to collect round some insignificant little bush, grows up and up and becomes a hill in no time. When the wind fell I descried ruins, on both sides, of fortresses and houses, and the whole strip traversed by us was strewn with broken brick and earthenware. At length, towards evening, after a ride of 20 miles in a S. E. direction, we sighted the Ak Serai canal. The land about was well tilled, and had some trees, and a number of Yurts studded the canal bank. Our intention was to have followed the canal the same day up to a village where a cousin of Said's lived, but it turned out to be impossible, so we had to spend the night in a miserable little Turcoman hamlet.

From this point we began to see occasional buildings. The Turcomans dwell in Yurts, but keep their cattle in regular stables or sheds, which they surround either with wooden palings or mud walls for security. The inhabitants of this part come from the Bokhara border, and are unacquainted with the Turcoman tribes of the Caspian. They all got round me, and so plagued me with questions that I despaired of getting free from them. At length I threatened them with the

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name of Khan Mahomed Ragim, as whose guest I announced myself, but that only made matters worse; they said they neither knew nor cared about the said Khan Mahomed Ragim, and clean refused to admit me for the night now at all. Losing all patience, I shouted abuse at them, on which they immediately retired, and appeared to be consulting together at a little distance. As I was already making preparations to pass the night among their Yurts, one of them presently stepped forward from their midst and offered me his Yurt, saying that it was all ready for me, as he had had it cleared. I accepted his invitation, and entered a most miserable hovel, from which I was immediately obliged to eject a number of curious intruders who had the impertinence to squat down beside me and pelt me with their questions. My old host seemed to be of Mongolian descent from his Chinese features. He did not know who the people were who had intruded, but was very grateful to me for not turning out himself and his daughter with the rest. I gladdened his heart with some tea. On account of the great number of people about us I ordered my Turcomans to keep watch throughout the night.

5th October.—We marched at daybreak, and, after skirting the canal for three hours in the direction E. S. E., arrived at two high trees, visible from a great distance, near which Said's cousin lived. The further we went on, the more cultivation disclosed itself. The fields, covered with the richest crops, presented a very different aspect to the sandy wastes of yesterday. In the whole of Germany I have never seen such well-cultivated land as here in Khiva. Every Yurt is here surrounded by an artificial water-course unbridged. Our course lay through lonely meadows covered with fruit trees, in which the birds sang sweetly. The Yurts and mud cottages scattered over this glorious landscape have a most cheerful appearance. So charmed was I with all I saw, that I reproachfully asked my companions why they too did not bring their country under similar cultivation, or, if their soil would not admit of this, why they did not emigrate to Khiva. They replied—"Ambassador, we are gentlemen; these people are but our servants. They fear their Khan; we fear God alone." In the country about the canals in the State of Khiva the villagers are for the most part Turcomans. These districts are very populous. The inhabitants dress well, and are a much quicker people than their brethren of the Caspian. On the road to Said's cousin's



abode we met a bridal party. The bride, much bedecked with all sorts of finery, sat on a tall camel in a saddle covered with richly-embroidered silk. I was most kindly received at the village, and a small chamber was placed at my disposal; unfortunately it was very dirty and dark. When I had changed my clothes a number of Chiefs came to congratulate me on my arrival. I admitted the most notable into the room, said a few words to them, and then went out to the rest, each of whom greeted me after his own fashion.

The Khan, it appeared, had not yet left Khiva, so I immediately despatched two Turcomans, one to Khiva to give notice of my arrival, and the other to the nearest fortress, Ak Serai, to let the Khan's Agent there (an Usbeg) know about me. Here my heart rather misgave me when I overheard the conversation of my Turcomans. They were, indeed, speaking in my praise, but said that I must be a most eminent personage because I could write, and had always noted at every well how deep it was and how far distant from the next. All this reached the ear of the Khan eventually, and was afterwards the cause of my recommendation for death as a spy. Vardi Khan, a Turcoman elder, visited me to-day from Khiva. He had served with the Persians in the war of 1812, been wounded and taken prisoner by the Russians. He had then taken service with the Russian General Lissanovitsh, had left him to go back to his home, and from thence had at last fled to Khiva. He gave me some intelligence about the Khan, which made me desirous of at once starting and accomplishing the remaining 34 miles between us and Khiva, but Said utterly refused to agree to this. I stormed and swore, until he at length sent for horses, most probably giving the messenger secret instructions not to bring them. Perhaps he wanted to detain me in order to screw a present out of me for his cousin, or he may have wished to serve the leaders of the caravans which had just arrived, and who hoped to get off the new camel toll through my mediation with the Khan. At any rate, the leaders themselves had already expressed this hope to me, only I had pretended not to understand them. No horses being forthcoming, I had to spend the whole day at this place. Wherever I went I was surrounded by people. A well-dressed Turcoman, belonging to the Khan's army, interested me for a time, his conversation being very sensible. At last he looked at the buttons on my great coat, and asked with great *naïveté* if they were made of silver. He kept turning the buttons round and round,



until I could stand it no longer ; so I asked him in a mocking tone if in Khiva the silver had the same appearance as in Russia. The by-standers raised a loud shout of laughter, but the young man immediately left me, and said, as he struck his hand on the hilt of his sword—"Mr. Envoy, we Turcomans are a simple people, but this is overlooked and respect accorded to us for our bravery and our sharp blades, which are always ready for the service of our Khan." I pacified him by hoping that this sword would also be at the service of my Czar should my mission succeed in uniting the two Sovereigns in the bonds of peace and amity. I went to bed late, and was just dropping off to sleep, when I was suddenly roused by the information that an officer from Khan Mahomed Ragim had arrived. A handsome young man entered the room, accompanied by another much older person. They sat down on my bed, and the young man immediately began to interrogate me, in the name of the Khan, as to the cause of my visit and the intentions of my Government. I replied that I could offer no explanations except to the Khan himself, or some person specially appointed by him to confer with me, and added that I had two letters to deliver, with the contents of which I was unacquainted. I showed Abdulla (the young man) the sealed letters, and begged him to intimate this to the Khan. He rejoined that it was strange that the Russian Czar should send embassies to Khiva from two quarters at the same time, seeing that there were already four Envoys in Khiva, and he then asked me if I was in the Russian Army.

I tried to convince him that the people he referred to could not really be Envoys, but only refugees passing themselves off as such, and told him that they ought to be seized, and if they really were impostors, I promised to have them sent to Russia in chains. Abdulla nevertheless stuck to his assertion that they were *bond fide* Russian Envoys, and afterwards they turned out to be four Noga Cossacks, who had brought over a letter to the Khan.

"Do you drink tea?" asked Abdulla. "If so, let me make it." I said—"We people drink tea by day, and not at midnight ; besides, I am ill and weary after my journey ; so do me a favour, and let me rest. Farewell." They left me, and in the sequel I found that this Abdulla was the son of an eminent official in Khiva, who had formerly been in the Khan's service. The Khan had never sent him to me, and his questions had been prompted by sheer curiosity. To-day I learned that two Russians, on hearing of the arrival of a corvette on the



Turcoman coast, had fled in that direction, leaving wife and children behind, the day before I arrived at Ak Serai, but had been caught. The people of Khiva have many Russian slaves, whom they purchase from the Kirgis, who kidnap them on the Orenburg frontier. They have also numerous Persian and Kurd slaves, whom the Turcomans supply them with. A slave has, indeed, a bitter lot in Khiva. On the slightest suspicion of intended desertion he is punished with the most cold-blooded cruelty, and should it be the second offence, the poor wretch is nailed by an ear to the door, and left to endure every privation for three days. If he survive this punishment his fate is not amended, for he is a slave as before.

6th October.—This morning the hired horses arrived, but I was delayed in starting for two hours by an invitation to breakfast from an elder. I mention this circumstance, because but for it things might have gone very differently with me, that is, I should have arrived in Khiva the same day, and the Khan, surprised by my sudden appearance, would perhaps have received me well and dismissed me early. Perhaps, also, had the rumour reached him that Russians were on their way to Khiva to avenge the death of Bekovitch, the people, by his orders, might have torn me to pieces before I ever reached the city. Such a report would spread very easily and rapidly in Khiva, and the Khan, who has never been out of his own territory and its surrounding steppes, would readily have given credence to it. I had not gone above six miles when a horseman met me at full gallop, and requested me, in the name of the Khan, to halt until the arrival of two officers sent to meet me the night before by the Khan.

I halted, and the deputies soon appeared, escorted by four horsemen. The elder of the two was a small man, about 60 years of age, with a white beard and the face of a monkey. He occasionally stammered, and then jabbered at a tremendous pace to make up for it, betraying at every word a vile character and an insatiable avarice for money. This was "Att Chapar Alla Vardi." The prefix "Att Chapar" signifies in Turkish "galloping horse," and had been bestowed on him because the Khan always employed him to proclaim his orders throughout the country. The other was a tall man, stoutish, with a slight beard, whose noble and modest bearing and superior manners quite accorded with the first words he spoke. His name was Ash Nazar, his age



over 30, and he filled the post of a "Yuz Bashi," i.e., Centurion, or Captain of a hundred. There is no such rank literally in Khiva, but the title is bestowed by the Khan in war time on the officers commanding divisions of his forces. Att Chapar, I subsequently heard, was a native of Astrabad, who had been brought to Khiva in his youth as a slave, where he recanted his faith, embraced the Siul doctrine, and married. His son, Khwaja Margam, rendered such important services in a battle, that he became a Court favourite, and was entrusted with the chief control of taxes and customs. Then, enjoying as he did the full confidence of the Khan, it was no difficult matter for him to advance his father and brothers to high positions. The Khan had bestowed much land and many canals on Att Chapar, and he had added greatly to his estate by his own purchase, so that he was now regarded as the third personage of the State in wealth and position. As he had a commercial connection with Astracan he begged the Khan to be allowed to entertain me as his guest until my business should be settled, hoping probably to receive a handsome acknowledgment from me in the event of a favourable issue, or to put the Khan under an obligation by killing me, should my death be thought advisable. He now informed me that it was the Khan's order that I should accompany him to his stronghold of "Yal Kaldi," where all was in readiness for my reception. We rode 14 miles N. by E. through a splendid and populous tract, during the whole distance seeing only one piece of steppe, lying between two canals: the weather was clear and agreeable, and from a long way off the fort rose to view, with a small garden to one side of it. It is in the form of a square, with a tower at each angle. The walls, built of stone set in mud, are 21 feet high by 150 long (per face). There is only one entrance, and that by a large gate, secured with a powerful padlock. Khwaja Margam is really the owner of this stronghold. Nearly all the great landholders possess similar ones. They are not loopholed, and the interiors contain a small reservoir for water, several courts and apartments, store-houses, mills, and cow-houses. They probably owe their origin to the disturbances which invariably occur on the death of a Khan, the empty throne appearing to be the signal for a civil war. But in times of peace they are also useful in affording safe retreats during an invasion of Turcoman marauders, for such a fort provided with all necessaries can hold its own for some days against a not too numerous band of these robbers. I found from 50 to



60 souls in Yal Kaldi, some living in the chambers of the building, others, with their wives and children, occupying Yurts which they had erected in the Courts. Just opposite the gateway stands a tower, and close to it a small postern leads from the interior into the garden, which contains a small muddy tank, some trees, and a fine vineyard. The garden is surrounded by a nine-foot wall, on to the outer face of which a Mulla's house and a mosque have been built. As I entered the place, Khwaja Margam's brother (one of Att Chapar's sons) came forward to meet me. He was an assistant in his brother's department, had a good figure and intelligent countenance, and altogether looked less savage and evil-disposed than his father. Att Chapar's family is distinguished by two peculiarities, *viz.*, their long beards (seldom to be seen in Khiva) and their inordinate avarice. The first day I received every possible attention. Said Nazar communicated to me a greeting from the Khan and from his elder brother, and brought me a tea equipage and tea and sugar. A pilau was prepared and all kinds of fruit given me, and a particular apartment placed at my disposal. The latter was but a dark, cold, unplastered place, but it was acceptable owing to the great heat outside. Occasionally I wandered about the Court or into the garden, but was always accompanied by a guard, which at first I conceived to be there as a mark of distinction, but discovered at last that I was really being treated as a prisoner. Four of my Turcomans were meanwhile permitted to go wherever they pleased and visit their relatives. I was assured that the Khan would give me an audience the day after my arrival, but I waited in vain for the invitation.

Then Yakoob (Att Chapar's third son), who had come from Khiva, declared as a positive certainty that I should be summoned on the day following.

8th October.—I received a visit from a certain Yakoob Bey, who spoke a little Russian. He had traded in Astraccan, lost his money there, returned to Khiva a beggar, obtained employment as a tax-gatherer, and had amassed a considerable amount of wealth again. He came from the Khan to ask me who I was, why I had come, what business I was charged with, and demanded that I should give him my letters to deliver to the Khan. Irritated at this request, I rejected it roughly, and told him that I had been sent to the Khan only, and if that personage would not receive me, he might let me go back. For the rest he might tell the Khan that I had two letters and some presents for him, which I wished to deliver

to him in person. Hereupon he left me in a huff. With this YakooB Bey came another YakooB, by birth a Jew, but who had long since embraced the Mahomedan faith. As this Jew traded with Astraccan and Orenburg, he understood Russian to a certain extent. He often visited me, and gave me much information about the state of trade between Khiva and Russia and Cashmeer, which latter country his brother had several times visited. One day a Turcoman in my service had heard at the bazar, that of Kazavat, that the Khan had left Khiva, and was going to receive me in a particular castle not far from Yal Kaldi. I communicated this news to Att Chapar and Yuz Bashi, who, however, would not believe it, and assured me that it was quite untrue which it was, for I heard that same evening that the Khan had left Khiva on a 12 days' hunting expedition into the steppe the very day that YakooB Bey had visited me. Meanwhile I began to be treated more discourteously every day. My allowance of food became scantier. I was no longer allowed tea or firewood for the kitchen; indeed, at first I was forbidden to buy food on my own account: this prohibition was afterwards cancelled in order to increase the perquisites accruing to Att Chapar, who managed my purchases for me. The surveillance over me became every day stricter. I was not allowed to leave my room for a single minute without a guard of two men, and at last they placed a sentry over my door with orders not to admit any one, whilst at night a man slept at the threshold, so as to be roused any time the door opened. My Turcomans who had been to the bazar further informed me that, on my arrival, the Khan had at once assembled a Council, to which all the eminent persons of the State, the Governor and Commandant of the town of Urganj (his brother Kutli Murad Inakh), and the Chief Priest (Cazi) had been summoned; that they had had a lengthy conference, but that no one knew the result. Several days after this, however, I learned from some of the Turcoman relatives of my companions, one among whom was in the domestic service of the Khan, that when Mahomed Ragim heard that I had taken notes on the road, he pronounced me to be a spy, and said in Council that the Turcomans who escorted me were to blame for not having murdered me *en route* and possessed themselves of my gifts, for, now that I was actually there, it was too late to think of it; whereupon he had asked the Cazi's advice, and the Cazi had replied that I was an unbeliever, who should be buried alive in the steppe. The Khan then said that he had taken the Cazi for a sharper man



than he really was, "for," said he, "supposing I have him killed, his Czar can easily come here next year and carry away the wives from my harem. It will be much better to receive him and let him take his departure; meanwhile he must just wait. I want first to know his object in coming." There was great difference of opinion as to the latter point. Some opined I had come to obtain the release of the Russian captives; others that it was to demand satisfaction for two Russian ships which had been burnt ten years before in the Bay of Balkan by the Atta Turcomans (who, since their expulsion from the shores of the Caspian by the Yomuds, had become Mahomed Ragim's subjects); others, again, thought that my mission must be with the view to demanding vengeance for the death of Bekovitch, &c.

They spoke of a Russian fleet said to have arrived off the Turcoman Coast, and to have been engaged in erecting a large fortress there, which was half finished, and suggested that, now I knew the road, I might next appear at the head of an army marching on Khiva. Many gave it as their opinion that the Russians might be at war with Persia, and that the Commander in Georgia was desirous of help from the Khan of Khiva. Some even asserted that the Russians had seized the Akkila fortress near Astrabad. Still they nearly all voted for my destruction either by execution or assassination, or, at least, for my enslavement. My arrival was a cause of great disquietude to the Khan, but from a dread of Russia he did not dare to take my life openly, however much he may have desired to do so. In this state of uncertainty and doubt, not being able to arrive at any determination, he thought it best to leave me in anxiety and suspense until he had procured further information or other means by which he might accomplish his purpose. Every day fresh deputations came to me to enquire about the object of my mission, but I remained perfectly reticent to all comers. This information as to the general desire for my destruction expressed by the members of Council, as also the secret scheme of the Khan's, gave me a great shock. I would not at first accept it as true, but further circumstances and additional reports convinced me very soon that it was no falsehood. Many schemes now began to flit through my brain. The idea of flight occurred to me, but thoughts of the disgrace of leaving my appointed task unperformed, whilst there was any hope, deterred me from this, and I determined to stay and defend myself manfully should I be set upon. Happily I found

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among my books *Pope's Iliad*, the perusal of which afforded me relaxation during my morning walks in the garden.

12th October.—This afternoon one of my Turcomans brought me some eggs and dried fruits, saying they were sent me by a Russian who was at the gate, and begged me to come out for a few words of conversation with him. As I did not dare to do this, I had to dismiss him without seeing him. Three days passed without the slightest further enlightenment as to my fate, but the strict surveillance and rough treatment did not leave much room for doubt as to the Khan's designs. I was for 48 days altogether in this state of suspense, and what I suffered in body and mind during that period is impossible for me to describe. I shall therefore occupy myself with other matters.

16th October.—Khwaja Margam's little son, of ten years old, who was a great pet of the Khan's, and had continually to play at chess with him, came to-day to Yal Kaldi, and brought me the news that his father would soon come to see me. As, however, I had been so often before deceived, I did not believe this. Khwaja Margam's brothers and many other officials often visited me, but bored me terribly instead of giving me any pleasure by their society. At length I hit upon the thought that perhaps among all the people about me one might be found who would give me genuine and true information as to what was going on in Khiva. I therefore assembled them all, presented each with as handsome a gift as I could afford, and endeavoured to persuade them one by one to do this; but no one would dare to speak with me alone from fear of being betrayed by the others. At last I found a poor old man, by name Bey Mahomed, a native of Bokhara, who wished to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. He had left his country 17 years back and lived in this fortress, supporting himself by the manufacture of waist belts. I presented him with a pair of scissors, and thereby won his favour to such an extent, that he ventured to come to me in secret and give me various scraps of information. He could not, indeed, give me very much news, but he did me a great service by informing me of the quarrel existing between the Yuz Bashi and Att Chapar on my account. I was really under the supervision of Yuz Bashi, a good, honest, unassuming man.

To him had been entrusted the duty of keeping a keen watch over me, and therefore, when I invited him to visit me alone, he used to fear evil consequences, and always strove to



avoid private interviews of that nature. Att Chapar never let him out of his sight, and always followed him when he came to me, dreading that I should give the Yuz Bashi a present. Noticing his greed, I one day (having given him cloth before then) presented him with a piece of linen, and conjured him to tell no one of it, particularly not the Yuz Bashi. His true character at once appeared; he hastily seized the present, hid it like a thief, ran away from the place, and, coming back, sat himself down beside the Yuz Bashi as if nothing had happened. I enlightened the Yuz Bashi on this afterwards, and he enjoyed the joke with all his heart, and spoke contemptuously of Att Chapar and his whole family. On my arrival I had presented the Yuz Bashi as well as Att Chapar with a piece of cloth, which Att Chapar's steward had taken under his charge, but afterwards it turned out that half a yard of the Yuz Bashi's piece had been cut off, and Att Chapar insisted that he had done it himself. This was a bone of contention between them, and when I complained to the Yuz Bashi of the want and discomfort I was reduced to, and of the uncivil treatment I was experiencing, my confidence touched him, and he became my friend, severing himself openly from Att Chapar, who now no longer dared, as heretofore, to sneak about after him. Every day now I sent Petrovitsh secretly to foment their quarrel, and, profiting by their dissensions, to pick up true information. The latter managed once to persuade the Yuz Bashi to come into the garden and meet me alone, and then I received the comforting assurance that, although the audience day was not fixed, I might expect at any hour to be called before the Khan, and that the latter would most likely decide my case directly he returned, and not go out hunting again without doing so, as a rumour was current among his subjects that the Khan was overawed by a Russian Envoy, did not know how to answer him, and had therefore fled into the steppe, &c., &c.

In these conversations I often interrogated him about the Khan, his relations with neighbouring States, and the internal economy of Khiva, and acquired a good deal of information on those subjects. The Yuz Bashi resented the tyranny of the Khiva Government, and appeared to dislike the Khan, but never said a word against him. He said that all the people about the Khan stood in such dread of him, that they feared to allude to me even, but he nevertheless hoped that my affair would have a fortunate issue. The Yuz Bashi was related to the second Vizier, Kush Begi, and had himself

fled to Bokhara some years before to escape the Khan's severity. He had remained there for two years, and returned only on the pressing solicitation of the Khan. After winning his confidence, my mind became much easier, and whenever I could not have a personal interview, I had only to send Petrovitsh to him: he took a sincere interest in my situation, and I could always tell by his countenance whether the news from Khiya was favourable or not.

When I subsequently met him at Tiflis as Ambassador from the Khan, he told me that the reports before mentioned with regard to the assembly of the senate and their vote for my death were not without foundation. When my Turcomans saw that things were going badly, they lost their respect for me, and, indeed, tried to abandon me from fear of having to share my fate. Directly they entered the market a crowd would assemble round them, asking on what day my execution was to come off, or if it were true that the Envoy had been strangled the night before, &c., &c. This gave their Chiefs a pretext for counselling them to desert me, and another thing that had great weight with them was the report that the Khan was much enraged against the Yomuds, because they had not yet paid the toll he had recently laid on all incoming camels. Said himself became disrespectful, as the following incident will show:—He had taken his female slave Fatima to all the villages and bazars about, but could nowhere get his price for her. This poor woman lived in the same room with all the rest of the party, but when they went out she used to be so ill-treated by the other people in the fortress, that I had frequently to send Petrovitsh to drive them off. On one of these occasions the ruffians behaved so badly to her, that Fatima fled, and declared that she would certainly take her own life if she were not sold soon. When Said returned I represented the state of things to him, and begged him to have it altered, and to sell Fatima, whose presence was a scandal to us all. He listened to me quietly, then rose up and said—"Farewell Murad Beg! My service is at an end, for since this is to be your treatment of me, I leave you. Fatima is my slave, and I shall sell her whenever and to whomsoever I please." With those words he went away, but I called him back, and he came, probably supposing I would ask his pardon for my interference. "Look here," said I, "go back since you see my unfortunate situation, and fear that you may, perhaps, have to share it; go back and tell Kiat Aga, who recommended you to me, that you have left me in this



place. Know, however, that, so long as I have my weapons, I fear neither you nor any one else, and that without weapons no one shall ever see me. Now go, and do not come near me again." These words affected him; he sat down and reflected, then began to weep, begged my forgiveness, and swore to stand by me and share my lot.

I made the matter up with him, and next day he sold Fatima. My food allowance became meanwhile every day scantier and of worse quality, and as I was not permitted to make my own purchases, I had to have recourse to stratagem, that is, I used to give Att Chapar's steward money to buy bread and mutton, and these, when they arrived, were passed off as a gift sent to me. Att Chapar was certainly a very eminent and rich individual, but so greedy was he, that he actually condescended to pilfer scraps of meat out of my store-room. He had seven Russian slaves in his service, of whom one was in Yal Kaldi, three in Khiva, and three in other places. The Russian at Yal Kaldi was called David, and had been kidnapped as a boy of 14 near the fortress of Troitsk on the Orenburg frontier, and sold as a slave at Khiva. He had already passed 16 years in bondage, and had changed hands several times. Quite a Khivan in manners and customs, he had nevertheless remained true to his faith. He was always kept away from me, but Petrovitsh once accidentally met him, and was immediately implored to get me to exert myself for his release. I sought every opportunity to get a word with him, and succeeded at rare intervals. I told him to try and find out from the Russians who occasionally came out from Khiva with their "Arabas" what was going on there, and what reports were current about me. David was easily able to get this intelligence, as he was intimate with four married Russians, who were favourites of the Khan, and always about his person. The news he brought confirmed what I have already given about the proceedings of the Council of State, and this was further corroborated by the ten Persian slaves who were in Yal Kaldi, and who did all they could to please me. Being very anxious to have a private interview with David, I managed to get him into my room one night, although he knew that it was death for him to be discovered holding communication with me. He gave me the very intelligence I had already heard from my Turcomans. I further obtained a deal of information from him about the Russian slaves in Khiva, and at last dismissed him with the present of a ducat. The Kirgis on the Orenburg frontier make it their business to catch Russians and sell them in

Khiva, but it is said that there are just as many Russian slaves in Bokhara as there are in Khiva. These poor people are all day set to perform the heavy labour, which neither Turcomans nor Khivans are capable of performing. For subsistence they each receive 80lbs. of meal per month, and no other remuneration beyond a cast-off coat (Caftan) now and then. Whatever they can save from their allowance of meal they sell, and by this means and pilfering on occasions they manage to scrape a little money together. When they have amassed the amount of their purchase-money (generally 20 to 30 Tillas), which seldom occurs under 20 years, they then purchase their freedom from their master, and are set at liberty, except so far as leaving Khiva is concerned, for the least suspicion of intended flight from the province is visited with capital punishment. A young Russian (up to 25 years of age) fetches from 60 to 80 Tillas. The Persian slaves are much cheaper. Of the latter there may be 30,000 in Khiva, but there are not more than 3,000 Russian slaves there. The Persians (caught by the Turcomans near Astrabad) come into the market in batches of five, ten, and even thirty at a time. Their captors do not trouble themselves about them on the road, and, if they get exhausted, leave them without compunction to die in the steppe. On arrival at Khiva their owner sets himself down with them in the market, and purchasers surround him, inspecting and examining the poor wretches, and haggling about their prices, as if they were buying horses. Sometimes the Turcomans kidnap them out of Khiva and take them back to their parents in Persia, who are often able to pay them handsomely. During my stay in Khiva several such batches were brought into the market, sold, and taken off to the villages. Att Chapar bought, when I was there, a boy of 16 years old, the son of a rich Astrabad merchant, for a pretty considerable sum, only in the hope, however, of being able to sell him back again at a great profit. The boy's sister, a girl of 14, was dragged through all the markets without a purchaser appearing, as the price demanded for her was 80 Tillas and sufficient good cloth to make a coat out of. Persian slaves are obliged to recant their doctrine and follow that obtaining in Khiva, but the Russians are not molested in this way. David assured me that they were even allowed a private place for their holy pictures, where they could say their prayers at night. On two festivals in the year they are permitted by their masters to go out walking and amuse themselves.



On those occasions they assemble together and intoxicate themselves with a spirit which they distil from a kind of berry.

The festivals generally terminate in murder or homicide. Masters have the power of putting their slaves to death, but seldom avail themselves of the right from economical considerations. They therefore punish their slaves, as a rule, by putting out an eye, or cutting off an ear.

In my own presence Att Chapar wanted to cut off one of David's ears, because the latter had been to Khiva and had stabbed a Persian slave in a broil. Att Chapar first struck him over the face with a whip, then seized a knife, and commanded that he should be thrown down and shorn of an ear, and it was with great trouble that Usbeg Mahomed Aga, his steward, did not restrain him from having this carried out. I did not take David's part from fear of rather injuring than benefiting him by my intervention, and so left the scene, but David came to me the same night and said—"Did you see how they struck me and wished to cut off my ear? More than that I received yesterday evening 500 cuts with a whip from the son, but nevertheless they fear me: just you see if they dont all fly before me when I get drunk!"

20th October.—Said Nazar arrived from Arganj. He came to see me frequently, and whether it was that I was suspected of desiring to escape, or what, I do not know, but every time I asked him if the Khan would be back soon, he answered me angrily—"Perhaps, then, you think of running away?" Well, just you try it, and you shall see what will then happen to you." I swallowed my anger, but answered him briefly that an Envoy never ran away, because his master was answerable for his safety. This conversation led me to speculate as to whether they had divined my intention of ultimately saving myself by flight should no hope remain; so I went into the garden, looked at the wall, and perceived that a ladder which had stood at the furthest point, and on which I had been counting as a stand-by, had been removed, whereupon I complained to the Yuz Bashi of Said Nazar's rudeness, and declared that, in spite of Att Chapar's venerable white beard, I looked upon him and his whole breed with the deepest disgust. "You are right," said the Yuz Bashi, "a long beard has not much to do with the matter. Why, a he-goat has a long beard."

21st October.—Hakim Ali Bey called on me and assured me of his friendship, and said he was about to fly from Khiva with his caravan. "The Khan's eyes," said he, "are just

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now filled with blood; at other times every one might approach him: now, however, he listens to no one, but lays an unheard-of impost on each caravan that arrives, thereby quite barring the road to Khiva for us, and he has us hanged and impaled, &c., &c." This was no exaggeration, for he continually put his Turcoman subjects to death for theft and other misdemeanours, and by this means contrived to keep some sort of order in his territory. During my residence there five Turcomans were on one occasion all hanged at the same time.

Hakim Ali Bey begged me to give him a letter to Ponomarev, but I could not bring myself to trust him, so I gave him an old coin of Julius Cæsar, which all on board the corvette knew I carried on my person, and told him to give it to the ship's Chaplain, with the request that he would burn a candle for it before the holy picture, and said that, as this was one of our customs, I did not ask the service from him secretly, but he might make my commission known to every one. "Forgive what has passed," replied he, "and tell no one that I have behaved to you, Turcomanlike, so rudely. I have come expressly here to bid you farewell."

In spite of the strictness with which the Turcomans were forbidden to come near me, they always found means of gaining access. A few of them were of great service, but the greater number were simply a nuisance.

23rd October.—At length the Khan had returned from his hunting expedition, and arrived at the Canal Dash Haos. Every one looked on it as a certainty that I should soon be granted an interview. But five days passed, and I was still kept under surveillance; so, seeing no means of escaping from my weary captivity, I determined to try the effect of threats as a last resource. I begged my keepers to go repeatedly to the Khan, and to say in my name that winter was now at hand, and that there was danger of the corvette's being ice-bound in the bay of Balkan, or of being wrecked, as she could not depart without me, and that, in case of her suffering any mishap, the Khan would have to render an account of it to the Russian Czar. Unluckily no one dared to carry this message to the Khan. Three of my Turcomans, seeing now how badly things were going, began to give themselves great airs, and one of them even asked me to discharge him. I did so, and perceived to my joy that he afterwards repented of his step, just as Said had done.

31st October.—To-day I invited Att Chapar and the Yuz Bashi to visit me, in order to learn for certain what



the Khan's real designs were, and begged them again to represent the state of the corvette to him, and how he would be called upon to answer for any damage it might sustain; but they prayed me to wait only for one day longer until Khwaja Margam should come to Yal Kaldi, where he was hourly expected. Finding them determined, I wished to send Said or Petrovitsh to Khiva, but this was not permitted.

4th November.—I was to-day informed by a Turcoman that a Yomud, by name Niyaz Batur, had arrived in Khiva from the Krasnavoda coast with two letters from Ponomarev, one for the Khan, and the other for me.

6th November.—At daybreak I sent off Kuhlji secretly to Khiva to look up Niyaz Batur and to ask him for my letter.

The next day Niyaz Batur brought the letter to me himself. He said that the Khan had been greatly pleased with Ponomarev's letter, and had been formerly deceived by the false reports brought in by the Turcomans to the effect that the Russians were going to build a fortress on the coast, reports now contradicted by the letter. The Khan had therefore, as a mark of his favourable intentions towards me, sent him personally to deliver my letter, and to pray me to have a little more patience, as he would very shortly grant me the desired interview. Batur said a great deal more, but every other word was in his own praise, or about the deep obligation I was under to him, so I did not attach much faith to it all. However, I entertained him to the best of my ability as a messenger from the Khan, and old Att Chapar constrained himself to-day to be liberal, and spent about as much money as he usually did in a whole week.

Ponomarev's letter contained nothing of importance. He merely said that he would await my return until the 8th November.

I gave Niyaz Batur a considerable present, and told him that, as I had no wish to keep anything secret from the Khan, he might communicate this letter to him. Niyaz Batur swore that in two days I should certainly be summoned to the Khan, and that meanwhile he would send any news that might be of importance to me by his own special messengers. The more I reflected on the matter, the less I trusted this Niyaz Batur's words, but a man deprived of almost every means of rescue grasps at any scrap of hope that may turn

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up; so I abandoned myself to the joy that this conversation afforded me, and believed the assurances and promises to be true.

To celebrate the occasion I invited the relations of my Turcomans to the entertainment, bought two sheep, flour, &c., had a pilau made, and treated them and the inmates of the fort as well as I could.

This was probably the first time that those gloomy walls had echoed the sounds of mirth; but as the half-starved slaves and Turcomans began to fight over the viands and to snatch the meat from each other's hands, the festivities were soon over, and I dismissed Niyaz Batur.

9th November.—This evening he visited me again. He had found the Khan at Mai Jungle, whither he had gone for a few days' hunting. Five more days elapsed without the Khan's sending for me. Meanwhile David acquainted me that the Khan was preparing for my reception, and had already ordered dresses for presentation to me; that one door of my room was to be closed, behind which a Russian would sit and overhear my words, and that I should be dismissed with marks of honor, &c., &c. I could hardly believe all this; therefore I begged the Yuz Bashi to tell me if he thought I should have to pass the winter in Khiva, or should be able to depart soon after the audience, as I wished to shape my plans accordingly. He replied—"I cannot deceive you, and therefore confess that I do not myself know. It seems, however, that you may expect the summons hourly." I begged him again to carry my message about the corvette to the Khan, and he promised that, if no one should arrive from Khiva by the next day at noon, he would himself ride straight to the Khan. Three days went by, and he never took his promised ride.

I represented to him again that he had nothing to fear in the matter, as, according to Niyaz Batur, the Khan was very kindly disposed towards me. He replied—"You are mistaken. I did not wish to shake your confidence at first and to make you distrust a man in whom you had once trusted, but now I must tell you that Niyaz Batur is an arch traitor; in one word, he is a Turcoman, whose word no one should accept as true. We Khivans take the measure of these gentry very accurately, and, accordingly, it is here that they usually end their career on the gallows." He was right in the main, for Niyaz never sent me the promised messengers, and strove only to overreach me in making the purchases which he had undertaken for me.



14th November.—At last the Yuz Bashi having been much offended by Att Chapar in some matter or other, came to me, and said that he would immediately ride to Khiva and represent to the Khan both my plight and the situation of the corvette. Yes, he was resolved, he said, in spite of the dangers, to tell the Khan in my name that he would be responsible to the Russian Czar for the loss of the latter, and that, if he wanted to keep me, he might at any rate let the corvette go by telling me so. Two days hence the Khan was to go off into the steppe on a three months' hunting trip, and all his carts and beasts of burden had already been sent on ahead. "If things go well," said the Yuz Bashi, "expect me back to-morrow afternoon."

15th November.—He left me on the 14th, and the whole of the next day passed in fruitless waiting. I began to think that the Yuz Bashi had been called to account for conveying my message to the Khan, or that my affairs were taking an unlucky turn, so I determined to carry out my early project and save myself by flight. This project I disclosed only to Petrovitsh, for I feared to trust myself all at once to Said; however, I managed to lead the latter on to recommend the very thing I was driving at. At first I pretended that I could not possibly bring myself to run away, but at last assented to his (?) proposal, and then we settled down to consider the best means by which the scheme could be carried out. Eventually we concocted the following plan:—Said was to buy horses from his relations and to bring two Turcomans to go with us. These latter were Khan Mahomed and Janak, robbers who were leaving Khiva to escape the gallows. I promised to compensate Said for the loss of his camels, and further to make over to him and his comrades the presents intended for the Khan. Said, it was arranged, was to go to the market on the morning of the 16th and buy boots and furs; he was to return by noon, go back to the village in the evening, and bring the horses to the fort at midnight, when I was to rouse my comrades, and we were then all to leave the place with our fire-arms loaded. In order that Said should run no unnecessary danger, it was agreed to wait for the Yuz Bashi until the evening of the 16th, and that, if he should arrive after Said had gone to fetch the horses, we should carry out our project all the same, however favourable the news might be that he brought, for without doubt the report of our intended flight would by that time have got abroad, and Said's ruin and our own would be the result.

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16th October.—Said went off in the morning, as agreed, and Petrovitsh and I looked about us for the best place to effect our escape out of the fort from. After much reflection I found that the best method would be to get over the wall with a rope, although Said had expressed his strong dissent to this plan, saying that it would be much better to go out by the gate and take Att Chapar's horses with us. With them we could then go at full gallop to the frontier, and, leaving the exhausted animals there, steal fresh ones from the Turcomans.

When all had been settled for our flight, I waited impatiently for mid-day to see what fate had in store for me. If I had not wished to leave Yal Kaldi secretly, I could certainly have forced my way out, for there were only a few lads and armed men in the place, and besides, I could have counted on the assistance of David and the Persian slaves. If pursued, I would have defended myself to the last drop of blood, and would probably have had a fair chance of getting off safe and sound. Noon came, but with it no Yuz Bashi, and no Said. I began to fear treachery, and was not a little anxious about Said. The sun was sinking, and I was sitting meditating in a corner, when suddenly Said made his appearance and sat down beside me. "You are late," said I, "but perhaps your zeal and your many commissions are to blame. Is all ready for midnight?" "Hold, Murad Bey," he replied; "don't be in a hurry, but listen to what I have done. When I reflected that men are ruled by destiny, I thought that perhaps it would punish us if we should fly and try to escape it." I stood up on hearing this, and said—"Why did you not tell me yesterday that you could not keep your word? Destiny wishes us to fly, but you are a traitor. Have you bought what I told you to? I know what my course shall be." "I have bought nothing," said Said, "and here is your money back." I had given him 10 ducats, and he now gave me a handful of small coins and clipped tillas, worth scarcely eight ducats, because, as he pretended, he had lost heavily in changing the money. Depending so much as I did upon Said, who might betray me at any moment, I was much puzzled to know what to do—to make my escape alone, or to abide my fate. My visible grief went to Said's heart; he begged my forgiveness, wept like a child, and promised to arrange everything for our flight on the following day. I was reproaching him bitterly for his mean behaviour, when suddenly Kuhlji came with the news that the Yuz Bashi was



approaching. The latter came forward cordially and said—"The Khan desires to see you, and to-morrow morning early we must be off. At first he was angry with me for leaving my post by you, but when I represented to him the circumstances of the case, the situation of the corvette, and the responsibility he was incurring by his discourteous treatment of an Envoy, he determined at last to admit you to an audience." I thanked him, and made him a handsome present, and this was the happiest evening I had passed in Yal Kaldi during my 48 days' imprisonment there. My Turcomans paid me now all due respect, and Att Chapar, formerly so rude and unbearable, condescended to all sorts of flattery and self-abasement, begging me pressingly not to tell any one how badly I had been treated during my stay.

17th November.—At night I sent to the neighbouring villages for the horses I required. The report of the Khan's favour had speedily spread, and towards morning friends and acquaintances came round to wish me luck, really only in the hope of getting something out of me, or of attaching themselves to my following, so as to come in for a share of the gratuitous guzzling of pilau and tea at Khiva. Att Chapar had promised the day before to provide horses, but the Yuz Bashli advised me not to trust him, as although he was a Mussulman, he had nevertheless all the deceit and treachery of his native country. Before leaving I made Petrovitsh distribute small coins among the inmates of Yal Kaldi, and rewarded all the servants and slaves who had tried to please me with trifling presents. They all knew me very well now, and came in a body to the gate to see me off; old men, girls, mothers, and children followed me, and even my warder, a surly dog, was civil for the first and last time.

We rode 29 miles to the N. E., and reached Khiva. After passing through two tracts of steppe intersected by canals, along the banks of which stood large villages and gardens (the Khivans thoroughly understand irrigation), I came to two canals, one crossing the other by means of an aqueduct, over which again there was a bridge.

Five miles from the city the gardens begin. There are roads running through them, and here and there appear places like Yal Kaldi, the residences of the landholders. The city, at a little distance, presents a very beautiful appearance. It is surrounded by a high stone wall, over which towers the sky-blue dome of the great mosque, with a golden ball at the top. The numberless gardens, which prevent one's forming an idea

of the largeness of the town, help to make up a most charming picture. Just in front of the entrance there are a number of ancient tombs, and a little canal, which runs right through the high road, and is crossed by a handsome stone bridge.

At this point there was a crowd of inquisitive people waiting to see me, who accompanied me all the way to the house set apart for my use. The narrow streets I found quite blocked up by a sea of people, pressing on every side, and ducking under the very horses, and the Yuz Bashi had to make a passage for us by main force. In the crush I noticed several unhappy Russians, who humbly took off their caps, and begged me in under tones to obtain their release.

After riding for about 500 yards between dwellings made of wattle coated with mud, we alighted at a nice-looking house in a *cul-de-sac*. The Yuz Bashi led me into a fine court-yard, clean and well paved, on to which opened several apartments. Of the latter a large one was allotted to me, and a smaller one to my Turcomans. My room was a very elegant one, furnished in oriental taste, with beautiful carpets, &c., but the cold was something intolerable. The prying crowd followed me even into my room, but the Yuz Bashi drove them out, and then went to report my arrival to the Khan.

During his absence the crowd again appeared, struggling and scuffling up to the very door and completely stopping all thoroughfare in the court-yard, the servants placed here by the Farash Bashi being quite unable to disperse them, and I was only relieved of my importunate visitors by the return of the Yuz Bashi. The gates and entrances were now securely locked, and only my guards remained, who, however, never presumed to enter the room without being asked to do so. They took up their quarters in the Court, and only a few went to their homes, first asking my permission. Att Chapar himself spent five full days in the court-yard, and was immensely pleased with the title of "Father," which I occasionally addressed him by in irony, especially when I abused him. The Yuz Bashi now felicitated me on my arrival, and announced that I was to be the guest of 'Mehtar Aga Yusuf, the Grand Vizier of Khiva. A cook was sent me, but independently of what he prepared, great dishes of food, tea, and fruits came every day from the Vizier. These marks of distinction are quite unusual among the Khivans, but in spite of them all, during the five days I was entertained in this fashion



there was not the slightest relaxation in the watch kept over me. On the evening of my arrival Khwaja Margam came to make my acquaintance. He is director of taxation, and a very crafty person, but very sprightly in manner. A whole hour passed in mutual compliments, then he begged my permission to solicit the Khan to entrust the whole management of the negotiations to him. I replied that it was not my place to nominate the Khan's officials; but he arranged it for himself the very same evening, and informed me that the Khan had honoured him with the duty, and now requested that I would make over the letters and presents to him. I hesitated for a long time, and would not venture to comply with his demand until I had satisfied myself from the Yuz Bashi as to the truth of what he said. At first I gave him only the letters, but had soon to make over the presents as well, as they were called for the same night, Mahomed Ragim being in the habit of sleeping in the daytime and working by night. Yuz Bashi advised me to seal up the packet, so as to prevent pilfering on the part of Khwaja Margam and his subordinates. This I did, placing the cloth and brocade, &c., &c., in a large tray, and packing the whole in linen. I then made the package over to Khwaja Margam, whose servants carried it off with the greatest secrecy. I ordered Petrovitsh to follow them, but he returned in two hours, which caused me to dread that some *contretemps* had occurred. He came in dressed like an Usbeg, and immediately took off a huge head-piece, and, hurling it into one corner of the room and his coat into another, protested that this should be the very last job of the kind that he would ever undertake, for it seemed he had been kept standing in a corridor until near frozen to death. At last Khwaja Margam had appeared, made him take off his clothes, and presented him in the name of the Khan with this strange apparel, whereupon he was dismissed. By the way he sold the garments to Att Chapar the very next day. Dewan Baki Mehta Aga, from whom I had borrowed the tray before alluded to, came to ask me for it back. I asked the Yuz Bashi about it, but he said "Mehta Aga will never see his tray again, for the Khan is a strong man, and never lets go of a thing that once falls into his clutches." Among the gifts there was a salver on which were packed two loaves of sugar, 10lbs. of lead, 10lbs. of gunpowder, and 10 musket flints. The Khan had employed himself all night in gazing at his presents, but his curiosity had been greatly roused by this salver. He lifted it up, wondered

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at its weight, and asked the Yuz Bashi if he did not think it might contain the ducats he was expecting ; but he was amazed, on taking off the linen covering, to find himself deceived. The Khivans put the following interpretation on this gift :— The two loaves of sugar stood, according to them, for an offer of peace and sweet friendship, whilst the ammunition signified that, if friendship were not agreed to, war would be the result.

18th November.—No audience granted yet. Being desirous of making a few presents to the Khan's eldest brother (Kutli Murad Inakh), I found that this was not allowed, unless the Khan gave his permission. I therefore sent the Yuz Bashi to obtain the necessary sanction, and despatched Petrovitsh in the night with some cloth, brocade, sugar, and other trifles. Petrovitsh had not been allowed to see the Khan's brother, but brought back five gold tillas which had been presented to him.

Among these gifts there was also a razor case, which was fitted with a tin soap box, containing a piece of black soap. Inakh looked at each thing separately, but when he came to the soap, an article he was unacquainted with, he began to suspect evil designs on him ; so he called for his physician, and as that individual was also nonplused, he sent messenger after messenger in hot haste to ask me about it. I had quite forgotten what the case contained, and requested, therefore, that it might be sent for me to look at just for a moment, when I would at once explain the contents ; but this was absolutely refused. I then desired that the small box containing the mysterious article should be sent ; this also was refused, and I was reduced to asking for the article itself without its box ; but here the Yuz Bashi replied—"Inakh is just such another strong man as the Khan ; he also never returns what he has once got hold of. I shall, however, go and calm him. Of course it must be a piece of soap and nothing else." The same evening I remembered that I had 10 beer glasses for the Khan, which I had forgotten to send with the other things. I asked the Yuz Bashi to give them to him now, and to apologize for my forgetfulness. "That is of no consequence," he replied, "our Khan will take at any time ; the only difficulty is to get anything out of him. With us glass is a rarity, and he will be much pleased with these ; but don't send him ten, for that is considered unlucky among us. Send rather nine, which is our lucky number." He therefore took nine glasses to the Khan, and came back at midnight. The Khan had been immensely



delighted, and had examined each glass separately, repeating—
“What a pity! What a pity that they did not send me these in the days when I drank brandy!” It turned out that he had formerly been much addicted to this beverage, but had now entirely renounced the use of spirituous liquors and tobacco. He had even prohibited smoking among his subjects, and proclaimed that disobedience in this matter would entail the delinquent’s mouth being cut up to the ears. Nevertheless, in spite of this stringent law, smoking was very prevalent, and the Khan was forced to connive at the practice as regarded some of his highest Ministers. Many Khivans smoke, instead of tobacco, the leaves of a plant they call “bang,” which must be most injurious, as a beginner loses consciousness on using it.

Among the Khan’s gifts there was also a glass “Kaliyan” (hookah-stand), which puzzled him much. The Yuz Bashi did not venture to tell him the truth, so said it was a vessel for holding vinegar, which he had a great fondness for. My burning glass caused much astonishment, many coming to me expressly to see it. The opinion was that its wonderful properties could not pertain to glass, and that therefore it must be some sort of rock crystal.

18th and 19th November.—These two days were also passed in close confinement. No one was permitted to visit me without special sanction. I remembered what David told me in Yal Kaldi, viz., that a Russian would be posted behind my door to listen to what I said, and truly I found everything turn out as he had foretold, and distinctly heard some one at the door. I therefore took a seat close by it, and spoke in a loud voice to the interpreter about the Khan’s warlike qualities, his great power, and the superiority of the Khivans to the Persians, &c. For three successive days I noticed that this eaves-dropping went on. The Prime Minister and those who had charge of me did their best to win my friendship, and, once when they saw me looking downcast, sent for a certain Mulla Said to amuse me. This person was about forty years old, was possessed of much intelligence, and had all the gay humour and vivacity of a European. His witty flow of talk was certainly most agreeable, and he played chess (a great game in Khiva) better than any one I have ever met. The Mulla lived entirely on the presents given him by the high officials of the Khanate, with whom he had frequently to pass his evenings. He played chess with them, wrote verses, read aloud, related stories, and so on.



He thoroughly understood Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, and spoke distinctly and well: he was intimate with the ancient history of Asia, and spoke of it with enthusiasm, giving point to his words by frequent quotations from the best poets. He told me laughingly that he owned a house in the suburbs, which he had not entered for 14 years, as he had invariably to spend his nights with the Nobles of Khiva. He complained bitterly of the present *régime*, and lamented the severity of a Khan who would not so much as allow drinking and smoking in his realm. He stayed over two hours with me.

20th November.—At length, towards evening, Khwaja Margam sent me a message through Said Nazar to the effect that the Khan wished to see me. I dressed in full uniform, but put on a Khiva hat, and had a red facing sewn over my collar, so as to conceal my real rank from the Russians about court. The Yuz Bashi told me that it was not permitted to appear before the Khan with a sword on, but I objected to lay mine aside, and told him to represent this to the Khan.

"There you go spoiling everything," said the Yuz Bashi. The Khan is now well disposed to you, but I shan't give him your message. I shall rather tell him that you have not got a sword at all, but only a long knife," and, indeed, it was only a Circassian side arm that I had, and not a regular sword. Yuz Bashi, however, soon returned with the reply that the Khan begged me to appear without any side arm whatever, so as not to transgress the custom of the country. I gave in, hoping thereby to fulfil my mission more quietly. The Yuz Bashi and my warders now preceded me, and likewise some strong men armed with clubs to clear the way. There was a great crowd, the very roofs swarming with spectators, and here, again, I heard the imploring voices of some Russians among the multitude. Thus we passed through a narrow cross lane to the gate of the palace, where I was made to halt until I had been announced. I was soon invited to enter. The gateway is a handsome brick structure, showing considerable taste. The first court-yard is not very large; it is sanded, and surrounded by a hideous mud wall. Along this wall 63 Kirgis Envoys sat who had only come to pay their compliments to the Khan, gorge themselves, receive the present of a coat of coarse cloth, and go home again. The second court is still smaller, and constitutes the arsenal. I observed here seven guns mounted on carriages, which quite resembled Russian pieces of ordnance. The third court is the so-called "Harniyush Khana," where



Councils of State assemble. From this court I was led into a covered passage (mud walls and thatch, the floor dirty and uneven), at the entrance to which stood the Khan's servants. On reaching the end of this corridor, we had to go down two steps into a fourth court-yard, larger than the other three, but surpassing them all in filth, and covered here and there with weeds. In the middle of this stood the Khan's Yurt. As I went down the steps, a man in a dirty sheep skin approached, whose slit nose betokened him to be a Russian convict, probably a refugee from Siberia. This fellow came behind me, and, seizing me by the sash, tried to drag me forward. At that moment the thought flashed through my mind that I was betrayed, and that I had been brought here unarmed, not for negotiation, but for execution. I turned round, and angrily enquired how he dared to pull me by my sash, but when I raised my hand the man ran off. The Yuz Bashi put my mind speedily at rest, however, by the information that it was the Khivan custom always to *drag* Envoys before the Khan. The Russian now drew near again: he did not, however, venture to touch my sash, but only held his hand up behind me.

I remained standing before the Yurt, in the interior of which the Khan sat, wearing a red robe (made out of the cloth I had brought him) fastened at the breast by a little silver button. His head-dress was a turban, and he sat motionless with crossed legs on a Khorassan carpet. On one side of the entrance stood Khwaja Margam, and on the other Yusuf Mehtar Aga, an old man, whom I now saw for the first time.

The Khan has a very taking exterior. He must be six feet high, and they say that no horse can carry him for longer than two hours at a time; his beard is short and red; his voice pleasant, and he speaks distinctly, fluently, and with dignity.

I saluted him as I came into his presence, but without taking off my cap, and in order to adhere to the customs of the country, I waited silently until the Khan should address me. After a few minutes of silent expectation, one of the Khan's retinue uttered the following prayer:—"May God preserve this country to the profit and renown of its Ruler," whereupon the Khan stroked his beard, an action followed by the two at the entrance, and now addressed me in the following words:—"Khush Galub San! Khush Galub San! (i.e., you are welcome.)" Envoy, wherefore art thou come, and what

dost thou wish of me?" I answered in the following words :—
 "The Governor of the Russian possessions lying between the Black and Caspian Seas, under whose rule are Tiflis, Ganja, Grusia, Karabag, Shusha, Nakha, Shekin, Shirvan, Baku, Kubin, Daghasstan, Astraccan, Caucasus, Lenkoran, Saljan, and all the fortresses and provinces taken by force of arms from the Kajars, has sent me to thee to express his deep respect, and to deliver the letter indited in an auspicious hour."

The Khan.—"I have perused his letter."

Muraviev.—"Besides this, he entrusted to me some gifts to be delivered to thee, which I had the happiness to make over some days ago. I am also commanded to make certain representations verbally to thee, and only await thy order to discharge myself of the message now, or at any other time that may be suitable."

The Khan.—"Speak now."

Muraviev.—"The Governor desires to establish a fast friendship with thee, and to enter into more intimate relations. It is therefore necessary that the trade between the two nations be placed upon a firm footing to their mutual profit and advantage. Our caravans going by Mangushlak must now travel 30 days through a nearly waterless steppe, and this wearisome journey is the cause that the trade on both sides languishes. The Governor is accordingly anxious that in future the caravans should come to the Krasnavoda harbour in the Bay of Balkan, as by this new route they would only have a 17 days' journey, and thy traders would always find merchantmen from Astraccan lying in the proposed new harbour, with all the goods and materials for which thy subjects now come to us."

The Khan.—"Although it is true that the Mangushlak road is longer than the Krasnavoda one, still the people on that route are adherents of mine, whilst the Yomuds inhabiting the coast towards Astrabad are subject to the Kajars. My caravans would therefore run the risk of being plundered, and for this reason I cannot agree to the proposed change."

Muraviev.—"Taxir! * If thou wilt but ally thyself to us, thy enemies shall also be our enemies. The renown of thy arms is well known to me. But what reply dost thou

* Taxir, the Khan of Khiva's title, meaning literally "wine."



command that I carry to the Governor, who desires thy friendship? He prays thee to send him a man who enjoys thy confidence, and who, on his return, will acquaint thee with his mind. For me, I shall, on reaching my own country, hasten to the Emperor and give him an account of my reception and thy answer."

The Khan.—"I shall send some trusty men with thee and give them a letter to the Governor. I myself desire that firm and sincere friendship may be founded between us. *Khush Galub San!*" The last words signified that I was to withdraw, which I did after bowing. I was then taken back to the "*Harniyush Khana*," followed by *Khwaja Margam* and *Mehta Aga*. Great dishes of sweetmeats and fruit were presently brought me, and I passed half an hour in this place, being questioned by *Mehta Aga* as to the relations existing between Russia and Persia, the strength of our forces in *Grusia*, &c., &c. To the latter question I replied that we could bring together in that province about 60,000 regulars, the same number of irregulars, and a formidable body of horse. The *Yuz Bashi* presently arrived with a servant, and gave me an embroidered turban from the Khan. This was tied on my head, whilst my waist was bound round with a rich Indian girdle, into which a silver-sheathed dagger was stuck, and a robe with short sleeves made of Russian brocade thrown over my shoulders; then, having exchanged my cap for a worse one, sent by the Khan, they led me back into the presence. Now came a repetition of the former scene. First I remained silent, then was ordered by the Khan to repeat my former words, which I did, receiving the same answer as before. I then said—"Khan, in what manner can I show myself worthy of the favours thou hast bestowed on me? I should, indeed, think myself fortunate if the Governor were to accredit me to thee next year, that I might prove my devotion."

"Thou wilt come if they send thee," he replied, "but let the Governor dispose of my representatives as he may think fit. He is quite at liberty to send them to the Czar if he likes." I went back to the principal gate, where I found a splendid grey horse of the Turcoman breed awaiting me. I mounted him and went off, my Turcomans, one on each side, holding the bridle, whilst two others walked beside my stirrups; but the crowd was so dense, that *Petrovitch*, who was on foot, could not keep up with me. During the interview I had addressed the Khan in as loud a tone as I could command, and had stood erect and unconstrained in his presence, which

seemed to the Ministers, accustomed to slavery and abasement, highly offensive, and they showed their displeasure by their looks at the time. The populace escorted me back to my quarters, and the Khwaja Margam came and had cloth coats distributed among all my people. Said was put out at only getting a coarse scarlet coat of the same quality as those given to the rest, and wanted to reject it, but did not dare to do so. Khwaja Margam also gave some further messages from the Khan, and informed me that a cannon founder from Constantinople resided in Khiva, and that the Khan had recently commanded him to cast an 80-pounder. He finally intimated that I was quite at liberty, and might go back when I chose.

All the servants now withdrew, and the people encompassed me in such a manner that without the Yuz Bashi's assistance I should never have been able to shake them off, or, indeed, to leave Khiva at all, as I had neither men nor horses at command.

The latter deficiency forced me to spend the night in the city, but thankful, indeed, was I to have discharged my duty. At the last I sent a petition to the Khan to be allowed to present something to his three most eminent Ministers.

Permission was granted, so I sent Mehta Aga, Khush Begi (who, however, did not reside in Khiva), and Khwaja Margam each a piece of cloth, some silk, and a watch. In spite of all my efforts I never contrived to see Sultan Khan, who had made a great name for himself in 1813 by uniting three Turcoman tribes, inimical to one another, under his standard, and leading them against the Persians. I asked the Yuz Bashi to allot the remainder of the presents according to merit. A glass "Kaliyan" took his fancy, and for a long time he pondered as to who was worthy of it. At last he asked me to cover my face with my cap and to make the allotment at random. This I refused to do, preferring to give the Kaliyan to himself, which made him very happy. Att Chapar kept bothering me for something, but I gave him only a scrap of cloth, with which he was much dissatisfied, and, going away in a rage, did not again give me the pleasure of seeing him. I heard subsequently that Khwaja Margam had sent in an enormous bill to the Khan for my expenses whilst at Yal Kaldi, charging at the rate of two tillas a day, whereas his father only received one tilla a day from him for my subsistence.



CHAPTER III.

Return.

21st November.—My wish had been to leave Khiva early in the morning and to go back to Yal Kaldi, there to await the arrival of the Khan's Envoys, viz., the Yuz Bashi, Ash Nazar, and YakooB Bey, a Sart by birth; the latter could read and write, and was a shrewd man, but bore a bad character. However, I had to postpone my departure until mid-day, and was meanwhile entertained again by order of the Khan, but was unable to eat anything, as cold pilau was all that was set before me. The Yuz Bashi went himself to the market and made a few purchases for me, and then, when all was ready and the horses stood saddled at the door, I suddenly remembered that the lock of my double-barreled gun was out of order, and asked for a gun-maker. A handsome young man of about 20, in a turban, but with unmistakable Russian features, presented himself to me as such. I asked him, if he spoke Russian, in that language, and he answered, "No," in Persian, and then proceeded to examine the lock, talking now Persian, now Turkish, all the time with the greatest fluency. In his conversation he showed much acuteness, and when he had discovered what was the matter, he took the gun and ran home with it. I now learned that his father was a Russian by birth, who had been kidnapped and sold as a slave at Khiva, where he had embraced the Mahomedan faith and married a Persian slave. The fruit of the marriage was this young man, who had made such rapid progress in his studies, that he was already a Mulla, and supported his poor family, having first had to purchase their freedom. I was in the act of starting when the young man, quite out of breath, brought me back the gun, but it was so badly repaired, that I could not use it. He also brought me some dozens of eggs and some white rolls, for which I gave him a ducat.

I gave the gun to the Yuz Bashi to examine, and asked him, should it appear necessary, to give it back to the gunsmith to put into thorough repair, and to bring it with him when he came to Yal Kaldi.

A Russian led my horse when I started, but muttered execrations on the awkwardness of the Khivans for their

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custom of being led in the daytime on horseback. On my way through the streets I saw many clusters of my unhappy countrymen at different spots, who greeted me affectionately, and addressed me as their deliverer. One of them walked for a long way abreast of my horse, and, when I turned to him, said,—“Oh! Sir, do not forget us poor people in the Fatherland.”

In order to clear a passage for myself, I made Petrovitsh scatter small coins among the throng, which caused great fighting, but had the desired effect of making an opening.

To my horror, after we had been about three hours on the road, Petrovitsh discovered that he had dropped my money bag, containing 300 ducats. By a most lucky chance Said found it again, or I should have been reduced to the greatest extremities. Said asked the Yuz Bashi to request permission from the Khan for him to load 17 camels with grain without paying the impost. I tried to persuade him not to ask for this, but Said was obstinate, so I told the Yuz Bashi that he should refuse to have anything to say to such matters. Nevertheless, the permission was obtained, and Said and his comrades were let off the charge on their camels, and I supplied funds for the purchase of the grain.

At 11 P.M. we reached Yal Kaldi. The night was terribly cold, but David met me a long way from the place.

The native of Bokhara Mulla Bey Mahomed, and all the inmates of Yal Kaldi rejoiced over the happy termination to my affair, and wished me a lucky journey back; but alas! I was doomed to a further sojourn of six days in this place. My good reception by the Khan impressed every one most usefully, and my slightest word now sufficed to clear my room of inquisitive intruders when I tired of their society. My Turcomans also were most obedient; they had from intercourse with me improved much in manner, and always managed to command respect from the people who visited them. I was particularly satisfied with Abul Hossein and Kuhlji; they served me with the most obliging zeal, and I therefore promised to send them both to the Governor as Turcoman representatives. This pleased them immensely, for they were used to an indolent life and loved a well-supplied board. The intolerable Att Chapar was absent. In the meanwhile, however, he had seized the horse of a poor Turcoman entering the fort to buy some tobacco, and refused to give it back for all the unfortunate's tears and



prayers; indeed, he had had him kicked out of the place, and, changing his mind three days later, had turned the horse loose on the steppe.

I procured here all the necessities for my return journey, past experience helping me to provide against the wants of the road. The cold was extraordinarily severe, so I bought furs, feet wrappers, and great Khivan boots.

For night wear I had large Kirgis caps made up, with long ear-lappets, so that by day I was a Khivan and at night a Kirgis in costume. I laid in also mutton and rice and purchased several Russian ambling ponies, which are common in the Khanate, and finally got all my weapons into thorough order, with the exception of the double-barreled gun which the treatment in Khiva had ruined. As I was preparing to clean this gun, I discovered a slip of paper in one of the barrels, on which the following was written in Russian :—

“We venture to inform your Honor that there are over 3,000 Russian slaves in this place, who have to suffer unheard-of misery from labour, cold, hunger, &c. Have pity on our unhappy situation and reveal it to the Emperor. In gratitude we shall pray to God for your Honor's welfare.” The perusal of those lines deeply affected me, and I thanked God that I should, perhaps, have the fortune to serve as an instrument of help. And now I can say I have done my duty, for the Emperor is acquainted with the circumstances, and will certainly exert himself in behalf of the unfortunates to the best of his power. Almost at the same time David brought an old Russian to me, the same who had previously wished to speak with me at the Yal Kaldi gate, but whose request at that time the circumstances compelled me to refuse.

The old man's name was Joseph Melnikov; he had been 30 years in slavery, was the son of a soldier, and had only been married a week when he was seized by the Kirgis near the fortress of Protshistinsk and sold as a slave at Khiva. After 30 years of bitter bondage, when by daily and nightly work he had at length scraped together sufficient money to purchase his freedom, his master cheated him by accepting his savings, and, instead of setting him at liberty, selling him to some one else.

During my first stay at Yal Kaldi I had seen several Russian merchant sailors from Astracai, who had been captured near Mangushlak and on the Emba.

MURAVIEV'S VISIT TO THE TURCOMAN INHABITANTS

26th November.—The Yuz Bashi arrived to-day, but Yakoob Bey is still at Arganj, detained there by domestic affairs.

27th November.—This day I departed from Yal Kaldi after receiving the hearty adieux of all. My first night's quarters was 11 miles from the fort, in the Yurt of a Turcoman, by name Aman, of the Bahram Shah race. Aman was a friend of Said's, had some kind of connection with the Court at Khiva, and had secretly acquainted me during my captivity with what went on there; but in spite of all this, he was a thorough-paced scoundrel, and had so cheated me in some purchases I asked him to make for me on one occasion, that I had been obliged to drive him away. With Aman there dwelt an old Turcoman of 80 years, who in his younger days had been renowned for his robberies, and now in his old age assisted this family by his counsel in important matters. He was held in high esteem by all Turcomans, and his conversation exhibited intelligence, experience, knowledge of men, and sagacity.

Joy at my departure kept me from sleeping, so I sat up all night, talking with this octogenarian. We did not adhere to our former route, but went back by the straight road from Khiva to the Tuar well, which passes by the Takka tribe. Travelling as I was with Khivan Envoys, I had now, of course, nothing to dread from the attacks of robbers: but with regard to the water scarcity, we heard that snow had fallen on the road, but thawed again, forming a puddle near the ruins of Shah Sanam, which was the only water we could depend upon obtaining until we reached the Ak Nabat well. We did not leave Aman's Yurt until the afternoon of the following day, as we had to wait for Yakoob Bey. I spent the morning in writing a letter to Ponomarev, which I intended to despatch by the Turcomans Khan Mahomed and Janak as soon as we should have crossed the last canal in the Khanate. The caravan comprised 20 Turcomans, who had all looked forward to the happy conclusion of my negotiations, had waited for my departure, and now called themselves my servants in view to drinking tea and feasting at my expense on the road, and to secure continued immunity from the Khan's new impost. Many of them rode on horseback. They were, for the most part, friends and relations of Said's, and had probably all got off paying the tax. They were so utterly wanting in shame as to come and ask me for clothes for the journey, but I drove them all away. There was a certain



Nazar Usta among them who had a young and very beautiful wife and two sons of eight and nine years with him. His laziness was so great, that he did positively nothing the whole way, his wife and children having to attend to the camels, as well as manage everything else. His sole occupation used to be to sit by my fire either to warm himself or to tell anecdotes. His wife also used frequently to come to me, and always brought me a piece of bread when she did do so, which I repaid in sugar. Their unaccustomed good living had now so told on my Turcomans, that they became as lazy as possible; only one man, by name Abul Hossein, did any hard work for me. He did everything, indeed; attended to the horses and camels, packed their loads, repaired the broken harness at night, and fetched the wood, kindled the fire, and cooked the food. We made much shorter stages now than on our upward journey, because the camels had all full loads: we seldom marched at night. But we had just as many hardships to undergo as on the former occasion, suffering from great cold and scarcity of fuel. I had at times to saddle my own horse, and almost every day to search for fire-wood and bring it in on my shoulder. Petrovitch's duty, however, was to provide fuel for the whole of the caravan. When, therefore, we arrived at the place where we were to pass the night, he would assemble all the candidates for tea, and go out to forage for wood, amusing them with stories and praising the active ones, but not doing a hands-turn himself, for the good reason that he was so wrapped up that he could not move, that is to say, he had on six coats, a Kirgis cap completely enveloped his head, &c., &c. We always arranged our bivouac so as to have the baggage on one side and the fire-wood on the other, placed so as to leave only one means of entrance.

In the midst of this sort of redoubt blazed a huge fire, and outside the camels lying close packed formed a second breast-work. My fire was generally surrounded by a number of lazy Turcomans, and even the Khivan Envoys used to sit there cross-legged, inert and fuelless, not daring to order their own people to gather wood. They accordingly availed themselves of mine, and as they were too lazy to prepare food from their own miserable stock, they lived on me as well. This vice of indolence is prevalent in Khiva, both among the natives themselves and the Turcomans, to an extent that quite surpasses belief. They are quite capable of going without food for two days in order to lie in the same place and do nothing, and their avarice is just as



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enormous as their laziness. They would invite me to eat with them, whilst all the time I was treating them. For this consideration they, to be sure, accorded me certain rights of superiority.

The following is an account of my return journey in proper order :—

28th November.—After mid-day we left Aman's, and by evening reached the Canal "Buz Hoiman," which is the last in the Khanate, after a march of about 17 miles. From this canal we crossed over into a tract of steppe as far as the eye could reach, single Yurts scattered here and there, but no cultivation of any sort. This evening I despatched my letter to Ponomarev. The cold was terribly severe, and I had to keep in motion all night without closing my eyes, and even then nearly had my feet frozen. Unluckily we could obtain no fire-wood whatever, and to make matters worse, three horses broke loose, and gave great trouble before they were recaught in the steppe. The Canal Buz Hoiman being frozen over, we carried off some pieces of ice for the way.

29th November.—We broke up our bivouac at a very early hour and pursued our course through the steppe. I was much struck by the large number of ruins.

30th November.—The road ran steadily through the flat steppe, very scantily clothed with brushwood here and there. From a distance we saw the ruins of "Daudan Kila."

1st December.—We passed the ruins of Kasil Kila, but did not halt here for the night, as our horses had not been watered since the 29th; we therefore pursued our march through the night of the 1st. The horses of these parts can go for four days without water,—a thing I should not have credited had I not witnessed it myself.

2nd December.—At daybreak we reached the dilapidated fortress of Shah Sanam, and this was the last ruin we came across for the rest of the road. We had a long search for the pool of water we had before been informed of. It was 30 × 8 feet in dimensions, and had only half a foot of water in it, but it is nevertheless the only stand-by for all the passing caravans. Here we all set to work, some fetching wood, others breaking up the ice with their daggers and melting it in kettles for tea, &c., &c. After watering our horses at this filthy pool, we again pursued our journey. The Shah Sanam ruin lies on the right hand side of the road, and is built on an artificial mound. The remains of some of the



apartments are still visible. This place is celebrated for an event the memory of which lives throughout the whole of Asia, and is perpetuated in song and legend.

Shah Sanam was the lovely daughter of a very rich and eminent man. The young Karib, renowned for his song and his bandura, fell in love with her, and she, to test his faith, demanded that he should not approach her for seven years, but travel in foreign lands for that period. The singer now makes over his bandura to his old mother, enjoining that no one shall be allowed to play on it, and starts on his travels. Passing through many lands and encountering many adventures and dangers, from which he is rescued by the force of destiny and the help of good men, he at last returns after seven long years, his true heart burning with all the old love and cheered by the thoughts of home. His mother meanwhile has lost her sight from continual tears shed for his absence, and three months before his return Shah Sanam has been promised by her ambitious papa to a wealthy neighbour in spite of all the poor little creature's entreaties.

The unhappy Karib seizes his bandura, flies to the house of his beloved, and appears at the wedding feast. Time and travel have changed his features, and no one recognizes him. He touches the strings and pours forth a song descriptive of his love, his wanderings, his anguish, and is discovered by the magic tones of the bandura, his adventures, above all, by his voice and passionate fire. The joy of union now takes the place of the bitterness of separation. Shah Sanam falls into his arms, and papa agrees to confirm their bliss.

The numerous ruins and visible traces of ancient canals are strong evidence that the Amu Dariya once ran through this neighbourhood in the days when that river emptied itself entirely into the Caspian. This tallies also with the Khivan tradition, that the river altered its course to the northward in consequence of an earthquake which took place 530 years ago.

3rd December.—All the horsemen now hastened on ahead of the caravan, hoping to reach the well Ak Nabat by evening, but we were overtaken by the darkness, and forced to pass the night on the road with hardly any forage for our nags. The caravan itself went on all night, however, and caught us up on the morning of the 4th, having passed a great caravan of the Takkas, who were probably only deterred from violence by dread of the Khivan deputies.



4th December.—We arrived before noon at Ak Nabat. The whole road right to Tuar was strewn with the bodies of camels and horses lost by the caravans which had preceded us. The cause of this was that the Turcomans had stayed longer than usual in the Khanate, in the hope that Khan Mahomed Ragim would remit the camel impost, and had only started when the cold had actually set in, some of them having paid the tax, others flying without doing so. Although not much snow had fallen, still the frost had made the ground like glass, and the camels, already enfeebled by want of forage, could not get on. Among the dead camels we saw some human corpses also. The Usbegs and Turcomans said that by their long beards they must be Persians, who are continually dragged from Astrabad to the Khiva slave market. They remarked *à propos* of the corpses in the most cold-blooded manner, that it was of no consequence whatever, and that one-half of those “Kazil Bashes” generally died on the way from hunger and cold. The water of the Ak Nabat well is rather bitter. This well is situated in the midst of a great steppe full of quick-sands. Only a few rises in the ground are visible in the vicinity. Before reaching the well, a road turns off to the left, which leads to the Turcomans of the Takka tribe. We did not halt until we had marched for an hour and a half after leaving the well.

5th December.—At 2 o'clock in the morning we started, and marched till daybreak. I rode on with Petrovitsh, but as an irresistible drowsiness fell upon me before daybreak, I got off my horse and followed Petrovitsh on foot, who unfortunately missed the road among the brushwood. It was cold and dark, and I no longer heard the voice of Kuhlji, who never left the caravan and always sang. I therefore stopped in the hope that the caravan would pick me up, and fell fast asleep, but, on awaking, found myself in the midst of the steppe, with no trace of a human being to be seen. In vain I shouted; no answer came: so, having the fate of the Persians before my eyes, I began to search for a path, and, by the happiest chance, came across Kuhlji, who was looking for me, and who took me back to the caravan.

6th December.—Started on the 5th again, and went on without halting until daybreak of the 6th, when we reached a district called Tiyunakla. Here we found some caravans of the Atta tribe: we rested on the steep banks of the old Amu Dariya bed. The name Tiyunakla is applied to a great



sinking of the ground which is to be seen not far from the banks above mentioned. It is situated in the flat steppe, is about 80 yards deep, and 600 yards in circumference. In the bed of this hollow, on the north side, there is a small spring of salt, bitter water.

On maps Tiynakla is shown as a great lake, but that is a mistake.

We had followed the left bank of the Amu Dariya for more than five miles before we could get across, when we found ourselves on a bald steppe, without a twig or a leaf on it. The river bed here is called Angiunj, and is not so deep as at Besh Dishik. In the river bed there is a little undergrowth. The night of the 6th we set apart for repose. The thermometer must have been down to 12° or 15° . The cold was terrible, and increased with the night.

7th December.—To-night also we had to bivouac on a perfectly bald steppe, not a symptom of vegetation to be seen.

8th December.—Towards morning we set out, and arrived by evening at the well of "Dali," which is looked on as the half-way house between Khiva and Krasnavoda. Beside this well stand the ruins of an old building. Here we found two Atta Turcomans with several camels, which they tried to exchange for the Khiva caravan camels, but their animals were in too bad condition to admit of this, for it was the "Atta" tribe whose caravans had suffered so terribly on the road, and their Yurts stood by a well in the steppe, parallel with the "Dali" well, but nearer the sea.

We wanted to water our horses and camels here, but there was a dead camel in the well, which had probably fallen in. From this place we found the climate much milder, and encountered no more snow for the rest of the journey.

Being impatient to get to the coast and the corvette, I determined to abandon the caravan and ride on ahead independently. I consulted with the Yuz Bashi, and, leaving him, Petrovitch, and my servants with the caravan, started off on the night of the 8th in company with Said, Kuhlji, and Khivet (leader of a Turcoman caravan).

9th December.—At daybreak we rested for an hour, and saw several Atta caravans. The country was not quite so flat as heretofore. From here to the coast we rode straight on end, hardly resting at all, that is to say, we only halted for from three to five hours per diem, feeding our horses on a



handful of "Jugan" and subsisting ourselves I know not how, for my companions devoured on the very first day all the bread and meat that I had laid in. For the two last days we neither ate nor slept. On the night of the 9th we reached the "Tongra" well. At a distance of one day's journey from here, on the left hand side, and four miles from the road, is situated the "Ak Kui," a well round which there is a settlement of the "Atta" tribe. Tongra is 74 miles from Dali. In the well we found the body of a drowned stag. From Tongra to the Tuar well we had only a ride of 23 miles.

10th December.—Before daybreak we reached Tuar, overtaking an Atta caravan in the act of watering their camels. As we had no leather buckets, we watered our horses from the water which the Attas had drawn for their camels. At first they opposed this, but we announced that we belonged to the Jaffir Bey tribe, and, in spite of their superior numbers, enforced our demands.

The Jaffir Bey tribe, from its numbers, its courage, and its extensive connection with other tribes, being universally respected among the Turcomans, the people of the Atta caravan at once gave place to us, lent us a wooden bucket, and begged pardon for their rudeness in opposing us in the first instance, saying that they did not know we belonged to the Jaffir Beys. The wells all along this route are foul. In the Dali and Tongra ones we had found a dead camel and a stag, and here, in Tuar, we heard the bleating of a sheep which had recently tumbled into one of the wells.

In the evening we took up our quarters in a ravine not far from the road. Here we found some heaps of dry sticks, and were about to utilize them as the materials for a fire, when we discovered several bundles of goods of sorts concealed under them. My Turcomans were highly delighted, and immediately set to work to open the bundles, which were found to contain raisins, tobacco, and "Jugan," and to appropriate the contents. This I, however, forbade in spite of Said's remonstrance. "This is a fine story," said he, "that we are to respect the property of these Atlas, whom we hardly esteem so highly as our cattle and our slaves, and who would assuredly not lose a similar opportunity of despoiling us." "Do as you will, then," I replied, "but my horse shall not taste a single grain of the stolen corn. I do not want to lose the beast, and this ill gotten forage would injure him." Said now represented that we had brought too little grain with us, but I answered



that that circumstance gave us no claim on the property of others, and added—"If you hold the Attas in such great contempt as you declare, why did not you take what you wanted from them when we came across their caravan yesterday?" Said now refrained from touching anything more, and the others brought back the articles they had appropriated, but Kaved remarked—"Of course it is disgraceful to pilfer other people's property, but you probably are not aware that these Attas formerly lived in the Balkan district, and that we expelled them 10 years ago for burning two merchant ships which had come from Astraccan to Krasnavoda, and selling the whole of the crews into slavery at Khiva. From that day to this no more merchantmen come to our coast, and we are forced to purchase in the Khiva and Astrabad markets. Judge now for yourself if the Attas do not deserve some punishment." As I saw that my orders were obeyed, I allowed them to take sufficient 'Jugan' for one feed from the bundles, leaving in its place two Dollars in each open package. When the Turcomans saw this they left the money untouched, but appropriated all the tobacco and raisins, saying that they had now been paid for, and it was no longer theft. At noon we set out again, and reached the mountain chain Sare Baba. In the daytime I could distinctly recognize the Kuli Dariya lake, which I have described in former pages. We had a short rest, and then rode on throughout the night, watering our horses at noon on the 11th at the well of Damur Jema, from the vicinity of which the Yurts, which formerly existed, had been removed.

11th December.—Before reaching the well I had a strange adventure. Day had not yet broken and I was riding on ahead, my sleepy comrades lagging behind, when I suddenly came on a Turcoman leading two camels. I rode up to him and asked him whence he had come, and whither he was bound. On being thus accosted he took refuge behind his camels for a moment, and then sprang out with a naked sword in his hand shouting, "be off, or I shall cut you to pieces." He was so rapid in his movements that I had hardly time to draw my pistol, but when I did so, and pointed it at him, the poor wretch was so terrified that he dropped his sword and lost all power of utterance. Said coming up presently explained the whole mystery. The man had taken me for a Kirgis on account of my head-dress, and had thought himself attacked by a robber. From him I learned that the corvette still waited for me. We rode the whole day through, and only halted towards evening not far from the well Siyuli. On the



night of the 11th I noticed two men riding, one on horseback, the other on a camel.

I pointed my pistol at the horseman, and asked him who he was. He took off his cap humbly and answered me in broken Russian. He turned out to be the young Yakshi Mahomed, son of Kiat Aga, who had picked up a few Russian words on board the corvette. He had left the ship nine days previously, and brought me a letter from Ponomarev. The intermediate time he had passed in Said's village, where dwelt a Turcoman girl, with whom he was in love, and whom he desired to marry. He told us that his father with all the notables had started on horseback to meet me, but had taken another road. Yakshi Mahomed's comrade was the Turcoman Vahl Usta who deserted Hakim Ali Bey, and came over to me on our upward journey. Seeing a fire off the road we went up to it in order to read Ponomarev's letter. By the fire we found two Turcoman families who were wandering northwards. On trying to return to the road we lost our way, and got back to the well of Siyuli with great difficulty at day break.

12th December—Being not very far from Said's Yurt, I sent Kuhlji on ahead to have food prepared. By evening we ourselves reached the Yurt, which now stood nearer the road, and were welcomed by Said's wife and the children of my other companions, who pressed round us on every side, together with some old men. Food was produced, and after writing to Ponomarev I fell into a sound sleep, the first I had enjoyed for some time.

13th December.—This morning I visited the wives of my other companions and started at about 11 A.M. accompanied by Said, his son, and three other Turcomans. We had only 29 miles now between us and the coast. At the distance of an hour and a half's journey from the latter we arrived at Mulla Kaib's Yurt, where I had been regaled with camel's milk on the way up. After this we ascended the mountain range, from the summit of which I beheld the sea and the corvette. I had already heard from Ponomarev, and had therefore no anxiety, but still this first view of the ship filled me with unspeakable joy. Sticking my cap on a long pole I tried to discover myself to my comrades on board, but no one seemed to observe my signals. However, shortly afterwards I saw a boat put off from the corvette, followed immediately by a second. The corvette lay a short hour's row from shore. As the boats always landed at a point not far from the Balkan



well, I made straight for the latter and found some Russian sailors drawing water, who recognized me. Presently the first boat reached, and then the second, with Ponomarev on board. Our mutual joy at seeing each other safe and sound again may be easily imagined; but the corvette had meanwhile had a bad time of it. Directly after my departure they had taken in all the available provisions from the merchant sloop, and then let the latter go altogether, not calculating on my long absence; the consequence was that food became scarce, and the crew had been on half rations for a whole month. Out of the 140 men on board only 20 were effective, 5 had died, 30 were down with scurvy, and the remainder were so debilitated as to be hardly capable of dragging themselves about the ship. The stock of medicines were exhausted, so the Doctor could be of no assistance. Therefore, in the middle of November, Lieutenant Bassargin begged Major Ponomarev to let him make sail homewards, being further actuated by the frequent appearance of ice in the bay. Ponomarev said he would give me a fortnight's more law, and then when this term expired he added another week to my time of grace. When the week was up he added one day more, and on the afternoon of that very day a Turcoman boat came alongside, and Ponomarev by the greatest good luck received my letter. Universal joy at once spread all over the ship, the grumbling was at an end in an instant, and it was unanimously determined to await my arrival. Hakim Ali Bey, about whom I had several times informed Ponomarev, counselling the latter to arrest him, never showed himself on board the corvette.

The old coin I had entrusted to him he sent by the hand of another man, and in spite of my pressing invitations on arrival he invariably declined coming, making excuses on account of sickness, and so on. During my stay at Khiva all Turcomans returning thence used to make a point of going on board the corvette, and intimating that my return was imminent, hoping probably to obtain some reward for the good news. Continually deceived by false intelligence Ponomarev at last lost patience, and on a Turcoman's presenting himself and solemnly assuring him that I would return in four days, he detained him on board, promising him a reward if it should turn out that he had spoken the truth, but threatening him with severe punishment should his information prove false. On the fifth day, as I did not appear, the poor rascal in tears confessed to have invented the whole story in the hopes of a present. Kint had always held himself aloof on board,



carrying on whispered conversations with the returning Turcomans. But when the want of an interpreter and other causes compelled him to leave the ship and throw up the management of the Turcoman negotiations, he could never afterwards, without the greatest difficulty, be persuaded to go on board. As soon as the news came of my approach he at once started off to meet me, but, as before stated, we missed each other. His object was to have a private conversation with me. Other circumstances which I learned on my return made me resolve to avoid him, in order not to be obliged to enter into further explanations with him.

15th December.—It was determined to celebrate my safe return by a festival, so we went ashore and found a great assemblage of hungry Turcomans. Having divined Kiat's unfriendly sentiments, and fearing, consequently, hostile action on the part of the natives, I insisted on a guard being posted on the beach. We had horse-racing, boxing, shooting at the mark, and foot races, the winners receiving money prizes. Said and Kuhlji were not present during the amusements, as I had sent them to meet the caravan.

17th December.—Yesterday Petrovitsh announced the approach of the Khivan deputies, and to-day we recognized them coming over the hills with a body of horsemen. Their escort was composed of Turcomans, who rode in front, firing into the air from very joy. I immediately repaired to land, had a special Yurt erected for the deputies, and placed a guard at the door to prevent the Turcomans from intruding and pestering them with questions according to their wont. Directly the caravan arrived I took the deputies on board, many Turcomans also striving to accompany us from motives of greed. We were just going to start when Said came into the Yurt quite pale, fetched his saddle and his sword, and began to saddle his horse. I asked him the meaning of this, but he could scarcely answer me for trembling, and stammered out that on no account could he go on board the corvette, for he had dreamt to-day that as he was riding along the frozen margin of the sea, his horse's fore feet had gone through the ice, and that this must betoken that something evil would happen to him on board. As I could not drive this idea out of his head, I gave up trying to persuade him.

During my residence in, and journey back from, Khiva Said had given me great annoyance. I did not let him see this at the time, but determined to punish him on my return, by making his bad conduct known to the Chiefs, and driving



him away from me in disgrace. But afterwards, when he acknowledged his faults of his own accord, I contemplated letting him off the disgrace, and simply intended to give him a private rebuke. Now, however, that he was going off as if nothing had happened, Petrovitsh detained him, and demanded that he should beg my pardon. Said replied—"May fate dispose of me as it pleases. I yield myself to its will, whatever may be about to befall me."

We now all went on board, and I introduced the Khivan deputies to every one in the corvette. Yakoob Bey had already made the trip from Mangushlak to Astraccan in a merchantman, and so did not show any particular astonishment, but the Yuz Bashi was amazed at everything he saw, and could not realize the idea of being actually on the sea. Ponomarev now distributed presents among my Turcomans. Said received a silver-mounted pistol, and then I took him one side and set his bad behaviour before him. He acknowledged it, begged forgiveness, and we became friends again. We passed this night on board.

18th December.—Towards evening we weighed anchor and steered for Baku. We had now two Turcoman and three Khivan representatives with us.

21st December.—After a calm we got a light breeze, that carried us to the island of Shiloi, not far from the promontory of Opskheron. The islanders here support themselves by seal fishery.

24th December.—Owing to contrary winds we did not arrive in the Baku roads until this morning, and went ashore at noon.

30th December.—I had time to go and visit the so-called everlasting fire worshipped by the Indians. In Persian it is called "Atish Kad," and is situated 11 and a half miles to the north of Baku. The area containing naphtha is about two miles in circumference, and directly the smallest opening is made in the surface and fire applied, a flame bursts out, which it is difficult to extinguish. The fire-worshipping pilgrims who come here use this fire for cooking purposes, and also for lighting, by sticking a tube into the ground and igniting the gas at the end. Here there is a pretty clean caravanserai, in the interior of which are some inhabited apartments, some others set apart for idols (which, however, I could not get a glimpse of), and the remainder at the disposal of strangers. In the middle of the courtyard



there stands a pretty large sacrificial altar, at the four corners of which burns the everlasting fire from high tubes. From 15 to 20 fire-worshippers generally reside here, but I found on my visit only six or seven. Their leader was an Indian who had formerly traded in Astraccan, and who besides his mother tongue could speak Russian, Armenian, Turkish, and Persian. The Indians whom I managed to see were nearly naked. They live and eat in solitude, each one having a fire burning in his room, before which he sits for hours at a time quite motionless with the hands up lifted or in some other position. However great the heat may be, they neither shift their ground, nor alter their posture. The emaciated countenances of these voluntary martyrs bear ample testimony to their sufferings. Among the seven present there was one who had served in an English regiment of sepoys.

January 6th.—The Governor, Jermolof, invited us to Derbent. We accordingly left Baku, and passed the night at Sugant.

January 9th.—We went *via* the Station of Kalisin to Khadersind, where we passed the night. Here we found a carriage in which we seated the deputies and then proceeded to Devitshi, where we passed the night of the 10th.

11th January.—We reached Kuba.

13th January.—Left Kuba.

15th January.—Reached Derbent, which the Governor also reached on the 17th, and four days after that the deputies were introduced to him, first the Khivan, then the Turcoman. The gifts sent by the Khan of Khiva consisted of two beautiful shawls, ten Bokhara dressed lambskins, two inferior saddles, and a few pounds of grapes. In return the envoys received two rings. The Khan had further sent two stallions to Jermalof, but they, together with the grey horse presented to myself, had to be left behind on the eastern coast of the Caspian. "You tremble on account of the Persians," once remarked the Governor to Kiat, who answered laughingly—"It is now winter time, when everything trembles." We left Derbent after the interview, went back to Baku, and thence to Tiflis, which we reached on the 24th February, and where we were cordially received by Lieutenant-General Welyaminov, the envoys receiving presents of cloth and silk stuff.



In the beginning of March General Jermolof received intelligence from Kislair, through the Governor of Astraccan, that Turcoman envoys had arrived representing the whole people. They made the same request as the deputation with us had proffered in writing, *viz.*, that the Turcoman races might be permitted to become Russian subjects, but with the proviso that a successor to the Sovereignty of Turcomania should be elected from amongst them. General Jermolof sent us over a copy of their petition, and on it we found the signatures of all the Chiefs, who here, however, styled themselves Khans, and among the rest that of Kiat; the latter, however, denied all knowledge of the document, and said it was a forgery. On investigation it turned out that the leader of the Astraccan deputation was the brother of that Kîhwaja who in the year 1812 led the Turcoman levies against the Persians. His home was on the Chinese frontier, and he had visited the tribes in order to obtain from them the horses, arms, slaves, and jewelry of his slain brother.

As he was rejected with ignominy, he conceived the project of winning the rulership by the help of the Russian Government.

4th April.—To-day the Governor received the deputies with much distinction.

22nd April.—The Khivan deputies now wished to start homewards, so I gave them the following letter to the Khan of Khiva:—

“I have introduced the envoys, Yuz Bashi, Ash Nazar, and Yakoob Bey, sent by your Highness to the Governor who accredited me to you last year; they will tell you how they have been received by us, and assure you of the Governor's friendship. I have also enjoined on them to convey to your Highness, the great ruler of the east, my most sincere thanks for the favour shown to me, as well as the confidence reposed in me by your Highness, and also to express the thanks of the Governor, who is now about to despatch me to my Emperor to acquaint him with the new alliance which has been concluded between the east and the west. May the rising and setting sun illuminate this bond of friendship until the end of time. May the splendour of this warm alliance shine like that orb, and be extinguished only with its extinction. Permit me further to say that having had the fortune to stand in your august presence, I cherish the hope that this letter may be received with favour and kindness in proportion to the veneration with which I am penetrated for your Highness. I would,



indeed, consider myself fortunate if I could hope that you would from time to time think of me, whilst I pray for your immortal glory, and the uninterrupted continuation of all the prosperity bestowed on your Highness by the Most High."

Thus ended the task which had been confided to me by the Governor.

Supplementary remarks by the German Translator, Philipp Strahl, chiefly derived from Voinovitch's narrative.

1. *Naphtha Island* (Cheleken*).—The Persians call this island "Chaharkan" (four mines),† and the Turcomans know it as "Naft Daga" (Naphtha Mountain). It lies in 39° 20' N. Lat., and is conspicuous among the many other islands at the entrance to the Balkan Bay from its extent and elevation. It is visible from a considerable distance, and its abrupt coast line, especially on the S. and E. sides no doubt accounts for its Turcoman appellation. The character of the surface and sub soil is identical with that prevailing in the rest of the group. The soil consists generally of fine yellow sand, with here and there a little earth, the latter either mixed with yellow clay in combination with white mica, or with the *débris* of felspar, which is common on the coast. In these strata are found the naphtha springs at various depths below the surface. Here they are met with at a depth of two fathoms, there at a depth of ten or more.

The black naphtha found here (petroleum) is of two kinds, one of which is thicker than the other. Both kinds are, however, very thin, mixed with particles of earth, and possess a much fainter odour than the naphtha found at Baku. The clay from which the naphtha is drawn is of the same nature as that on the surface, but is darker, coloured by reason of its impregnation with the oil. The number of springs is uncertain, as they are frequently filled up by the sand, which necessitates new wells being sunk. Roughly estimated the number may be 20, but the sand interferes with their flow to such an extent that the annual yield hardly amounts to 1,600 centners. How trifling compared with the Baku annual yield! Besides this black naphtha there is also found

* Persian, Arabic, and Turkish words are spelt so peculiarly by the German translator that it is hard to trace them to what they are really meant to stand for, for instance, he spells جایی (Jai) "Tachai" يال كلوي (Yal Kaldi) "Ihl Hahldi," &c., &c., might not therefore his "Tacholeken" (which I have written "Cheleken"), perhaps, really be composed of the Arabic word كـ and the Persian word گـ and stand as "Jilakan," &c., the mine of brightness?

† (The German translator renders this four wells.)

MURAVIEV'S VISIT TO THE TURCOMAN INHABITANTS

Barbadoes tar (bitumen segne, crassum, nigrum, maltha, poix minérale, poix de terre ou malthe). This forces itself through the soil, forming a stratum of itself, which becomes hardened by the heat of the sun. The Turcomans free it from sand, &c., by frequent meltings over fire, when all the foreign particles sink to the bottom owing to superior specific gravity. The pure tar floating on the surface is then poured into pits prepared for it in the ground and left to cool, when it becomes more solid, and assumes a glossy black colour like "asphalt." This the natives call "Mumm," and carry it in its present form to Khiva, where it is mixed with wax and used for making up into candles and torches as in Persia. The salt found in great abundance on the island is not rock salt, but is obtained from a salt lake like those so frequently to be met with in Southern Russia, such as the Lakes of Elton in Saratovshen of Jenidja, Staroe, and Krasnoe in Tauria, &c. The lake from which it springs is very large, and is dry the whole year round, except just during the rainy season when water collects in it. When dry it is quite full of salt, which is very firm, and might therefore be taken for rock salt: unfortunately it is full of sand and earth and, consequently, very impure. Here also, like in Astraccan, there are a quantity of salt morasses. Indeed, the whole island is so impregnated with salt that fresh water is not to be found on it, and the water drawn from the wells is so brackish that the Turcomans only use it mixed with camel's milk, their usual resource when drinking water runs out. In conclusion, Naphtha Island resembles all those in its vicinity. The vegetable kingdom is represented by the "golden rod" (*Solidago, Lin.*), and in a few places by those kinds of grass which thrive in muddy or sandy soils, but these are all scorched up in the summer time, and the only verdure is then to be found in the swampy places, where reeds afford a poor means of subsistence for the camels, sheep, and the few goats of the Turcomans. Wild animals occasionally appear, such as foxes, wolves, wild goats, and pigs, and among the feathered tribes the most common are sea-gulls, cormorants (*pelecanus carbo*), mews, herons, and several species of snipe.

This is the only naphtha yielding spot on the east coast of the Caspian, although such places are not uncommon on the south coast, but it is worthy of note that the naphtha springs in the Balkan Bay Islands are exactly opposite to the springs at Baku and in the same degree of latitude. The traces of naphtha can be observed in the sea itself, for in the



neighbourhood of the Island of Shilov the smell of it is quite perceptible, and it is even to be seen floating on the surface. Gmelin, in his *Book of Travels &c.*, has fully set forth the influence of naphtha on the Caspian, it being the principal cause of the bitterness of its waters.

VOINOVITSH'S NARRATIVE.

2. *The Island of Ogurchin*.—Is uninhabited, and only visited during Turcoman civil feuds. Seals abound here, as also the so-called red geese, and rose-breasted starlings fly about in clouds.

The Turcomans call the island Idak or Aidak. The name Ogurchin comes from Ogurjali (*i.e.*, pirates), a title bestowed long ago on the inhabitants of the coast and the islands of Balkan Bay on account of their piracies and their raids on the Persian provinces. All the Balkan Bay islands are known by this appellation to the Russians.—STRAHL.

3. *The Bay of Balkan*.—So long ago as 1731 Soimonoff published a good and learned description of the Caspian Sea, together with a map, and did not omit this bay. In 1763 Professor Müller produced a fresh edition, his work is to be found in the Proceedings of the St. Petersburg Academy for 1762. In 1743 Captain Wudruff described the bay; in 1764 the eastern coasts of the Caspian were explored by Tokmatsheff; and in 1782 the bay was again carefully examined and described by Count Voinovitsh. Balkan Bay from its entrance to its innermost part is studded with islets, nearly all of the same area and elevation, some of them presenting the appearance of hillocks standing out of the water. At the entrance to the bay stands the Naphtha Island, to which the former islet of Dervish is now united, and to its south is situated the long island of Agurechin or Aidak. The former island of Darji, remarkable for its naphtha springs, and the so-called Naft Tapasi (Naphtha Hill) are both one with the land at the present day.

So shallow is the water behind Naphtha Island that only the smallest rowing-boats can venture into the middle of the bay, where there are a number of sand banks. There is generally a fine land breeze from the E. in the morning. Gales from N. E. fill the whole atmosphere with sand and dust, which sweep in clouds across the islands. The atmos-



phere in Balkan Bay is very dense, and on account of foul vapours most unhealthy. The N. W. portion of the bay is called Krasnavoda ("red water"), presumably on account of the reddish sand shining at the bottom of the shallows and on the surrounding mountains. The Turcomans called it Kizilssa, also meaning red water. It affords a good harbour for ships visiting the eastern shore of the Caspian, for it is protected on all sides from the wind, and there are excellent anchorages all over it. The only thing to be careful of is the sand banks going in. The mountains surrounding the harbour consist partly of the dark grey granite characteristic of the rest of the Balkan range, and partly of reddish coarse grained sand-stone. The country round about is a sandy desert, and neither trees nor brushwood are to be seen on it. The little grass there is is burnt up in summer, but nevertheless a number of nomadic Turcomans (estimated by Voinovitsh at 2,000 families or "Kibitks") inhabit this tract, and are often forced to drive their flocks three or four days' journey into the steppe for fodder. The necessities of life they procure from Khiva or from the Russian seal-hunters who sometimes visit them, bringing flour, wooden vessels, and such like for traffic. In later times many of these nomads have been driven away by other tribes and have taken refuge in Khiva. In this neighbourhood stood the redoubt which in the year 1716 Prince Bekovitsh caused to be erected during his disastrous campaign against the Khivans, but very few traces remain at the present day to mark its site. The Turcomans assured Count Voinovitsh that both the other forts, one of which stood on Alexandro Bay, the other on the Kargan promontory, had been washed away and been covered by the sea, a proof that the Caspian has encroached on its eastern margin since the beginning of the 18th century.—STRAHL.

4. *The Balkan Mountains.*—This range, which embraces the Balkan Bay, is of the same formation as the range round Astrabad Bay which stretches away northwards along the eastern coast in insignificant hills. It is a low range of red sand-stone, here and there springing up into rocky heights, the loftiest of which gives its name to the rest of the chain. From a distance this mountain, the Balkan, has the appearance of an abrupt promontory. Further northward there are two other rocky heights not so lofty as the Balkan, one the Kushama, the other the Bardshakla. The rock composing these as well as all the smaller hills is



chiefly a kind of dark grey compact felspar or granite, called by the Turcomans "Karataş" (ie., black stone). In the Balkan Mountain itself pure quartz-rock of various colours is found, and here the Turcomans quarry the ordinary millstone grit and carry it to the Khivan or Persian markets.

The whole coast is barren, producing nothing beyond reeds, a little bitter grass, and the golden rod (*Solidago Lin.*); but on the Balkan Mountain there is a better vegetation, a few trees (chiefly pomegranates) here and there, and where the soil is loamy and intermixed with good black earth, it is covered with rich and luxuriant grass. This fertility attracts wild animals to the mountain, and it is frequented by panthers, wild pig, wolves, foxes, wild goats (*Jairani*), steinbocks, &c.



MURAVIEV'S VISIT TO THE TURCOMAN INHABITANTS OF THE EASTERN COAST OF THE CASPIAN SEA.

TABLE showing the Turcoman tribes, their strength, the districts they occupy, and their minor branches.