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978-1-108-07749-1 - Narrative of a Residence in Koordistan, and on the Site of Ancient Nineveh: With Journal of a Voyage down the Tigris to Bagdad and an Account of a Visit to Shirauz and Persepolis: Volume 2

Claudius James Rich

Excerpt

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RESIDENCE IN KOORDISTAN,

&c.

CHAPTER XII.

Departure from Sulimania—Description of the Country—Village of Derghezeen—Omar Aga—His Son—The Pass of Derbend—Leave Koordistan—News from Sulimania—Omar Aga’s disappointment—Fine Plain—Villages—Artificial Mount—The River Caprus, or Lesser Zab—Altoon Kiupri—Camp of Faris Aga—His inhospitality—First Sight of Arbil—Description of the City—The Plain of Arbela—Gaugamela—Mount Makloube—Yezid Village of Kellek—The River Zab or Lycus—Face of the Country—The Ghazir Soo or Bumadus—Hajee Jurjees Aga—Town of Kermelis—Ruins of Nineveh—Arrival at Mousul.

October 21.—WE bade farewell with unfeigned sorrow to many friends, and mounting our horses at about half-past six in the morning, we quitted the garden of our estimable and kind friend the Pasha, and proceeded over an undulating country across the plain of Sulimania, passing on our left hand the large village of Ak Boolak. The whole plain is higher on this than on the western side, and slopes down more than half way to the opposite hills. At about a mile and a half from Sulimania we reached the Tanjeroo or Sertchinar river, which we had passed on our journey from Bagdad, and which was now a mere brook, though its bed is not less than a hundred yards over. On its right bank was the

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village of Eliaseh. After passing the large village of Bavun Mirdeh, or Father-is-dead, at twenty-five minutes past nine we came to that of Kelespee or Teperesh, which is situated a little below the mount near which we encamped on our road to Sulimania from Bagdad. Here we halted for the day, notwithstanding the village is but an indifferent one. The peasants were all busy getting in the cotton harvest, which contributed to enliven the scene. The lands hereabouts are watered by a little stream, which, running south and a little east, falls into the Tanjeroo river. Goodroon was at this spot, just opposite to us, forming a wall of rock, and inclining about north-west and south-east. The western range of hills was visible about a mile or a mile and a half off, crowned generally by a crest or line of rock, which grows higher as it proceeds southward. The rock shows itself also from the sides of the hills in some craggy fragments, as if the hills were in a state of decay. Northward, at the distance of two or three miles, these hills send forth a low range which joins Goodroon, and seems to close the vale of Sulimania in that direction. On this low range is the mount and remains of Kerwanan*. Farther on behind Goodroon appear the huge bare rocks of Koorkoor.

Thermometer—2 P.M. 85°; 10 P.M. 59°.

* One of the roads from Sulimania to Keyu Sanjiak passes by Kerwanan, and keeps through Soordash along Goodroon. Distance fourteen hours.

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October 22.—We mounted at twenty minutes past six this morning, and were obliged to go a good deal to the north-west, in order to avoid a morass. The air about sunrise was very sharp. Soon after seven we came to the Mount of Taslujee, the place where the line of hills is broadest and lowest, and has not the stony crest which appears at intervals along the summit of the rest of the range, whose increase in height above the plain to the south-east is probably from the sinking of the plain in that direction towards the river Diala. The same is the case with the plain of Bazian, into which we descended after a very gentle ascent about eight o'clock. This plain is divided in the centre by a line of lower hills than Karadagh, which appeared to terminate a little to the south of our road, and the composition of which was sandstone, the layers rising to the east and inclining down to the west. We met hereabouts some men leading a colt for sale to Sulimania from Kerkook. I took a fancy to it, and struck a bargain and purchased it for one hundred and fifty Eyn piastres*. This transaction did not detain us, as the men turned back and bargained with us as we jogged on †.

* The value of the Eyn piastre was at that time from 2s. to 2s. 6d.—*Ed.*

† The perpendicular rock, of which I observed the azimuth at Sulimania, and which is put down in my astronomical journal as Ardalan, was on our right in a north-west direction. It is a crest,

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4 VILLAGERS GATHERING COTTON. [CH. XII.]

At twenty-five minutes past ten we turned south-west to the village of Derghezeen, the hills which divided the plain making a similar bend, and soon gradually terminating. Derghezeen lies under a little range of hills which come from near Derbend and runs towards those which divide the plain; though it terminates before it reaches them, leaving an opening in the western division of the plain of Bazian. We arrived at the village at ten minutes before eleven, and occupied our old encamping ground.

The inhabitants of all the villages we passed were out gathering cotton, which was a very pleasant, cheerful, and even novel sight, as, except on occasions like the present, the roads are very still and solitary throughout the East. The people of Derghezeen are of Turcoman origin, and still retain their language, and their appearance is sufficiently distinguishable from that of the Koordish peasantry. Our excellent friend Omar Aga, I am happy to say, is still our mehmandar. I applied to the government at Sulimania to restore to him some villages, of which he had been deprived in a most shameful way. They have promised to oblige me, and he has remained behind to secure them, but he has sent most of his men with me. Nearly two hundred persons depend on him and look to him for support.

on the top of the hills which form the west boundary of the plain or vale of Sulimania.

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The family of a person like him in Koordistan soon becomes quite a tribe. Two of his men, Faki Kader and Awraman, have taken a great liking to me: they stick to me wherever I go, and follow all my motions. If I stop, they are both by me in an instant; if I look at any thing, they prick up their ears, look in my face, and then in the direction I am looking at. They are quite my shadows.

Avla, Omar Aga's youngest son, a boy of seven years old, arrived at our camp to-night from Sulimania, with only a lad about his own age. He had just got his father to say he might go with us, when in a moment he took him at his word, and while he was engaged at breakfast very quietly packed up his little baggage, saddled his horse and made a journey at one ride which we had been two in performing.

Thermometer—6 A.M. 56° ; 2 P.M. 84° ; 10 P.M. 64° .

October 23.—We were off by half past six this morning, and proceeded up the valley formed by a small line of hills just behind Derghezeen, and another similar one opposite, also coming north-west from Derbend and running to Bazian. At twenty minutes past seven we passed through Derbend. The layers of the mountain are bent down on each side as if on purpose to form the pass. Just outside the pass rises a layer of rock parallel with the mountain as if it were part of its ruin; and outside of all, at the foot of the mountain, which is a prolongation of

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the Karadagh *, the strata are very curiously bent and undulating. In the mouth of the pass is a little square ruin like a fort, and in it a well lined with very large stones has lately been discovered.

From the Pass of Derbend we proceeded in a south-west direction. Before us rose the little furrowed line of hills of Gheshee Khan and Kara Hassan, running north-west and south-east. On our right hand the level of the country sunk at once in an abrupt and ruinous manner, as if it had fallen in to the depth of more than a hundred feet, and was curiously marked by parallel ribs of sandstone at equal intervals, all running from north-west to south-east, and like all the strata we have just passed, rising to the east and falling to the west, with a very considerable dip. The bottom of this *Cauldron* was again furrowed and cut up by water-courses, in many of which nitre was discoverable. The soil was generally of a very dark red colour. We descended into it at half past seven, and kept through it for the remainder of our day's journey.

* The Karadagh runs up to Derbend i Bazian, and thence, after running a little way straight like a wall, it runs a little west and forms the hill of Tchermala ; thence it turns more west and forms that of Khalkhalan. The Karadagh diminishes in height all the way from the Seghirmeh, which is very high, and towers above all the other mountains in the distance. Tchermala and Khalkhalan are inconsiderable. They seem of earth, and their sides are much furrowed. Soon after this line of hills terminates or loses itself. Aghjalar is a district beyond Tchermala, reaching to the Keuy Sanjiak river, and contains ten villages.

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CH. XII.] THE KERKOOK HILLS.

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We soon after came to the little village of Sheikh Weisi in the district of Shuan, and here we found we had come a little out of our way, and we turned S. 45 W. in order to regain our right road.

We observed great quantities of oleander growing by the sides of the little streams. We reached our true road at a quarter to nine. The country round us had a most strange appearance, and looked as if it had been *ruled off* into parallel oblique lines by layers of crumbling sandstone just rising above the soil.

At half past ten we came to the large village of Ghezalan, where we saw some Jews. The people of this part of the country seem to be Tcheragh Sonderrans, or light-extinguishers*. Soon after leaving this village, the level began to rise again, and our road was very broken and hilly. We arrived at our resting-place for the day at the village of Ghulumkowa, in the district of Shuan, at ten minutes past twelve; having been five hours and forty minutes on our march, and having had a very unpleasant day's journey over very troublesome roads, and through a hideous country. The Kerkook hills appeared from hence like a flat plateau, descending by a step broken and furrowed, into the tract of country between them and Derbend.

Thermometer—6 A.M. 62°; 2 P.M. 84°; 10 P.M. 64°.

October 24.—Mounted as usual about a quarter

* See note, Vol. I., p. 26.

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8 SINGULAR TERRITORIAL REGULATION. [CH. XII.

after six, and ascended out of the narrow ravine in which the village of Ghulumkowa is situated. The soil of the country was now all of earth and pebbles, which seemingly cover the ribs of sandstone, seen in the very hollow part we came through yesterday, and the colour of the earth was not so red.

The whole tract, however, is still thrown up into little hills, as I believe all such gravelly tracts are, and scooped out into deep, abrupt ravines, sometimes cut down by water-courses to the depth of sixty feet, and in such places the soil alone was apparent; that is, even at that depth, no sandstone was to be seen. The pebbles that I chiefly recognized were sandstone, marble, or gypsum, and limestone. We passed two very deep and somewhat difficult ravines, the ascents of which were more considerable than the descents, and soon after reached the village of Ghiulkowa. We were still in the district of Shuan, which is regulated by a kind of territorial canon which I do not thoroughly comprehend: the soil belongs to Kerkook, but the peasantry to Koordistan. This district sometimes depends on Sulimania, and sometimes on Keuy Sanjiak.

From Ghiulkowa our road wound along the tops of this furrowed and hilly country, which resembles and is indeed a continuation of Kara Hassan; but it is now of a very burnt and bare appearance, and except a few fruit-trees seen here and there in the hollows, nothing green is visible in

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any direction. We often thought of the pleasant vales of Koordistan, beautiful even in their autumnal decay. Old Goodroon still reared his head in the distance.

All the waters, yesterday and to-day, ran to our left hand. At half past seven, a road branched off a little to the south of ours to Kerkook. Soon after eight we were obliged to halt, to replace a shoe which my horse had cast. Khalkhalan and Keuy Sanjiak were hence due north of us. We mounted again at half past eight. The country now was rather less cut up, or at least not to that great depth; and at ten minutes before ten we arrived at the village of Kafar, our place of rest for to-day. The peasants are mostly in tents about the village. Here both lands and people belong to Kerkook, and we have fairly bid adieu to Koordistan. We were three hours and thirty-five minutes performing our journey of to-day.

Omar Aga joined us last night from Sulimania. He tells us that Osman Bey has at length consented to go to Keuy Sanjiak. Poor Omar Aga has failed in his application for the restoration of his villages, and has brought with him all his men and family, except the women. I will yet do what I can for him.

Thermometer—6 A.M. 50°; 2 P.M. 88°.

October 25.—We were off by six this morning; our road N. 30 W. We descended into a valley,

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watered by a stream, which supplies many villages, and a great number of mills with little square towers, each in a cluster of trees, looking at a distance like village churches. The valley gradually widened down into the plain, I believe of Gieuk Dereh. The stream runs into the Kiupri Soo. We passed many villages, and, among the rest, one large one of the name of Omar Bey Keuy. We had now entered a fine wide plain, still covered with pebbles, but much cultivated. It was all corn land. Large villages were seen scattered about in every direction. There was one at the entrance of the valley into the plain, with a small artificial mount close to it, the name of which I could not learn. The Kizbeer hills were before us, stretching from our left, and the plain extended to the foot of them; and on our right was a continuation of the broken, hilly country we have just left.

At half past ten we passed Gieuk Tepeh, a village, and a very large artificial mount, on our left. It was due west and less than a mile from the road. The mount was like a truncated pyramid, and had a lower one projecting from it on the north-west, the whole looking very *Babylonian*. About half an hour afterwards, we passed another lesser mount, close to our road; and at mid-day arrived at Altoon Kiupri. The day was extremely hot, and the stage much longer than I had expected. We occupied six hours and a half in performing it.