

THE LEISURE HOUR.

BEHOLD IN THESE WHAT LEISURE HOURS DEMAND,
AMUSEMENT AND TRUE KNOWLEDGE HAND IN HAND.—*Cowper.*



“THIS CAN NEVER BE THE PLACE WHERE WE ARE TO RESIDE.”

NINE-TENTHS OF THE LAW.

CHAPTER VIII.—HOME, SWEET HOME!

This is no my ain house.—Old Song.

“WHAT are we stopping here for, I wonder?”
It was Miss Spilby who said it. She
seemed to be talking to herself; but Mrs. Chamber-
lain heard her.

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“Shall I call some one?” the footman asked, as
he stood by the carriage door. Mrs. Chamberlain
could not help observing that he had not touched his
hat when addressing her, nor even made use of the
customary “ma’am.” He looked along the narrow
garden walk as if he deemed it inconsistent with his
livery to walk so far, or to knock at such a door.
Some people are very particular as to what is due to
their cloth.

“Shall I call some one?” he repeated.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

OUT AMONG THE TURKOMANS.

BY THE REV. JAMES BASSETT, OF TEHERAN, PERSIA.

I.

THE Turkomans are the most warlike of all the nomads of Central Asia. The name Turkoman designates certain tribes of Tartar, or supposed Tartar, origin, who inhabit Turkistan, particularly that country which has the Aral Sea on the north, the Caspian on the west, the mountains of Elburz on the south, and the river Oxus and country of Bokhara on the east. Also that territory situated between Persia and Bokhara, having the north-eastern portion of Afghanistan on the south.

The chief city of this people in the north was Kheveh, and in the south Merv. The capture of Kheveh by the Russians has caused the Turkomans, especially the Tekke tribe, to concentrate near the latter city. The tribes near the Persian border are, the Goklen, who inhabit the banks of the river Gorghen, and are nominally subjects of the Shah; the Tekke, by far the most numerous and powerful, who hold all the country north-east of Persia to Bokhara; and the Salor, who are found near Herat, east and south-east of Meshed.

The Tekke have recently become famous, if they were not before, by means of the Russian military expedition sent against them, and the affair at Geog Tapa. According to their own statements, this tribe number forty thousand tents, and five hundred thousand souls. Their true strength is, probably, much less than this estimate makes them to be.

There are two routes by which the country of the Tekke may be approached from the south-eastern shore of the Caspian Sea, and from the Persian capital. One route may be said to start from Astrabad, and to run through the Goklen country, along the north side of the Elburz mountains to Kooshaan, or to the northward of that town. It should be understood here that by route we do not intend to imply that there is a good road through that country. We intend by the term to indicate rather a direction, within certain limits, which travellers take, often with only a dim path to follow. It is a difficult road on account of the nature of the country, mountain, desert, and morass, the great distance to be traversed, often without habitation, and the hostile, treacherous character of the people; the proximity also of a border where from time, back of which the memory of man runneth not, war has raged. The traveller can put but little confidence in contracts for safe passage, since the contractor has little or no power beyond the limits of his own cluster of tents, or the tents of his clan.

Much the safer and more practicable route to Merv, and to the Tekke country, for the ordinary traveller, is by way of Shah Rude, and through Northern Persia. The road, if a path can be called such, follows the Elburz range, keeping close to the south side of the mountains, in order to avoid the kabears (salt morasses) of the great desert of Khorasan. There is now telegraph and post from Tehran to the city of Khorasan, a distance of not less than six hundred miles. Khorasan is virtually on the border, though Persia claims, and nominally holds, as far as to Sarrakhs. Although the discomforts of travel in this route are such as are known in desert and half civilised lands only, yet one may be assured of finding, in all the way as far as to the Persian border, post-

horses to ride, food, shelter, and a people subject to an organised government; and a man may hasten on as fast as he can gallop a horse, riding day and night; or he may go more slowly by caravan of mules, horses, or camels.

It is seldom that a European attempts to penetrate as far as to the Tekke. While on the border, I heard of a military man who, coming from the south, marched up to that ambiguous thing, the border, and dashed his horse across for a run to the dear Turks off in the desert; who, however, was overtaken by a company of Persians, and escorted back, with the assurance from his captors that one so highly esteemed as he could never be permitted by the "king of kings" to put his life in such jeopardy as it would be in if he should go among the Turkomans. Such journeys and ventures are, in general, left to military and diplomatic agents, and are rarely undertaken by them; for to none are the inducements in any way commensurate with the hardships to be endured, and with the improbability of a return to civilised life. It is only in such great and good objects as the Missionary and Bible Societies have before them, that one can find, as the writer of this did, a purpose worthy of the pain and hazard incident to the journey.

The second of the above-named routes is said to be now safe from Turkomans; but it can truly be so said only by way of comparison of the probabilities of an attack being made now and in previous years—probabilities, arising chiefly in the present time from the capture of Kheveh, and the peace made between Turkomans and Persians—a peace which enables the former people to concentrate all their forces for fighting Russians.

The road is quite void of incident as far as to Shah Rude; thence to Khorasan there is abundant evidence of the terror and devastation occasioned by the nomads.

I heard that a military escort, which I was advised to join, left Shah Rude twice in each month, to conduct pilgrims and traders across the Joie Khof (place of fear), a name used for the road from Khair Abad to Mazenon, a distance of about one hundred and twenty-five miles.

It was near sunset that I rode up to Khair Abad. The name means good abode or no abode, according as the first word of the compound is understood to be Arabic or Turkish. The latter signification seemed to be most appropriate, considering the fact that there was no house in the place, but only broken walls and the ruins of a village destroyed by famine and Turkomans. I threw a piece of carpet upon the ground, and upon it some of the luggage, and sat down to rest an hour, having ridden sixty miles that day, and having in anticipation a ride which was to continue until morning.

The crowd which was to make up the caravan had been gathering for several days, and consisted of the followers of Ali from nearly every quarter of the globe in which Sheahs* are to be found; Tartars of Russia, Turkey, and Afghanistan; but most of the

* Sheah is the name of that sect of Mohammedans who believe that Ali was the first rightful successor of Mohammed, and that the succession of the Khalifate belonged to his heirs.

people were Persians. Very many went on foot, some on horses, some on donkeys, and others on camels. The escort consisted of thirty mounted men, twenty-five infantry, and a six-pound gun drawn by three span of horses.

Turning to a Persian merchant near me, I said, "How is it that our road for the next four days is more infested by Turkomans than any other part of our journey?" In reply, he pointed his finger to the north-east, saying, "You see that mountain yonder; it is only ten or twelve farsang distant from our road; just on the other side of it are the Turkomans." The Goklens profess to be subjects of the Shah, but they are friends of the Tekke, and would not if they could prevent the Tekke crossing the border. The ground here is favourable for them, being pretty smooth and open up to the mountains; the passes are short and easy, compared with those of other parts of the Elburz. But after four days' travel, the road curves to the south; the mountain ranges are higher and more rugged, so that if they pass beyond a certain point they run great risk of being caught. I could realise the situation when later I observed that a few miles from Mazenon, there is only a narrow belt or neck of dry land between the mountains and a morass, which is part of the net work of kabears which extends far south into the great desert of Khorasan. If a Turkoman passed that point, his only way of escape was either across the mountains or over the narrow belt of land, in any part of which a rifleman would have him within range.

As darkness and the hour of starting drew nigh, the people went forward at will and without order, singing a salavaut, and shouting in chorus, "Yü Ali! yü Ali!" After the three signals had been given—the first to indicate the time for feeding horses and men, the second for making ready the loads, and the third for the start—the horses were hitched to the gun, and driven off on a gallop and trot, which was kept up for about one hour, in order to overtake the people to be protected. Then a halt was ordered that all might come up—the guard of cavalry formed on either side of the gun, the infantry in front; and there was a general gathering up of forces and putting on of battle array, preparatory to passing certain places said to be "places of fear." These manœuvres were repeated every few hours during the night as the caravan approached the so-called dangerous parts of the way. The first half of the night was whiled away by many persons in talking of their adventures with the Turkomans, or of attacks made and battles fought here and there by them, their mode of warfare, their weapons, horses, food, country, religion, and women. Many could speak, from the experiences of a long captivity among those fierce men, of the manner in which they take, and how they treat, captive Persians. To the inexperienced and uninitiated in that crowd, every ravine became a lurking-place for a Turkoman, and every hill a breast-work, peering around or above which his head is dimly seen. The whole caravan seemed to have—as all that border-land has—a nightmare, in which the actor is a Turkoman armed with single cimeter, and mounted upon his well-known horse, charging over every desolate plain and from every valley.

The pilgrims sang frequently; the footmen leading off in some extempore song, the chief theme of which was the better land, and the blessing of the prophets, who were a "hundred thousand" or more. The song often contained a short eulogy on some one

in the caravan, but the stanzas uniformly closed with an allusion to the "place of the saint" and "the prophets' throne," and the repeat of a salavaut: "There is our rest! there is our rest!" in which the people all united their voices with the neighing of horses, the braying of donkeys, grunting of camels, barking of dogs, and crying of babies. In the intervals between the songs might be heard the trained voice of a dervish, ringing through the darkness, "Yü Ali! yü Ali! yü hak! yü hak!* hak!" But a long time before the rising of the morning star, the singers ceased their singing, the crowd had lengthened out into a wavering broken belt, many miles in length. Men were reeling and falling off the animals on which they were riding, for sleep to a Persian is stronger than a Turkoman. The infantry had become cavalry, mounted on borrowed donkeys and mules. The voice of the dervish was heard after long intervals only, shouting, "Yü hoo! yü hoo! yü hoo! hoo! hoo! oo!"† At early dawn there was a rush, as the gun was dragged forward; then a trumpet blast as a halt was made, the signal for the gathering of the pilgrims. There was a call to prayer; coats and carpets were spread out upon the ground, and the people all bowed in reverent silence towards Mecca. The summary of the day's work in such a journey is soon made. It is sleep, eating, and drinking, though the last might often be left out of the estimate. The travelling by night in the East certainly prevents the thirst felt by those who journey by day.

The station, or manzil, as it is called, where the caravan halted, consisted of a small village, surrounded by a high wall, a post-house, called a "chapar khana," and a caravansari, and possessed the usual natural advantages and features of a Persian town—a high mountain on one side, a plain on the other, a rill of water flowing from the mountain, and a few fields on the plain, testifying by their verdure to the quantity and virtue of the rill. Near the gate of the town a dervish discoursed to a crowd of boys and girls concerning the prophets, the portraits of whom, painted upon a large canvas, were hung upon the wall of the village. Some manœuvres of the big gun attracted my attention. Going up to it, I opened the caisson. A soldier, stepping up, closed it with a slam; but it was too late to conceal the contents. The only ammunition the box contained was old shoes. I was told that for the safety of the people the powder and ball were packed in panniers and put on a horse; but I observed at night that the horse was allowed to follow the caravan at will, being loose and without a driver.

The second night seemed in nearly all particulars a repetition of the first, except, in its dawn, disclosing to us another station in the wilderness. Meon Dasht (middle desert) is the name given to a post and telegraph station midway between Rhair Abad and Mazenon, where caravans, coming from either direction, meet and change escorts. It consists of a high brick wall, inclosing about two acres of ground, and within which are two reservoirs of water, eight or ten huts, a post-house, a telegraph office, and two caravansaries, one of which was built in the time of Nadr Shah, the other recently put up by a Mussulman of Tehran, as an act of religious merit. The two reservoirs are underground—are wells with sides

* A name for God, also for truth.

† Another name of God.

and roofs of burned brick. The descent to the water is by means of a long flight of steps, and into it there is an incessant dipping of all the vessels of pottery, and brass, and copper, with which travellers in that country provide themselves, until the fluid, through this process of dipping and other causes, has acquired nearly the consistency of paste well salted.

The first thing to be done on arriving in town is to find a room—somewhat difficult where the demand is many times greater than the supply. Leaving the caravan, we were among the first to enter the gate. But the western-bound caravan has already taken possession. My servant is equal to the emergency—was born in the land and trained in its customs. He immediately rushes up to the occupant of a desirable room, saying, "Get out," or "Take the sticks; a great man is coming;" and thereupon begins to throw the man's luggage out of the room. When I protest against this unchristian procedure, he replies, in the hearing of the ejected man, "No matter; we will give him a present," a remark which seems to fully compensate the man, if we may judge from his satisfied countenance, and his declaration that the house is a gift to me, and he himself my sacrifice.

After the usual experiences of the day, I determined to explore the country outside the wall. Calling the young man who had been choring for us, and whose business it was to bring us the post-horses, we told him that we hear there is a well of water just outside the wall. He disappoints us by saying that the well is supplied from the reservoirs within the gates. But we doubt the statement, and resolve to see for ourselves. But we find the report is true, that there is no pure water nearer than a farsang and a half. We walk on slowly, talking as we go, water being our theme. We try to tell the man of a better land, and of that water of which if a man drink he shall never thirst; but his ear is not trained to the language of the new life, neither is the mind trained to the apprehension of its thoughts, and the heart is no willing, ready interpreter.

Turning to me, the man said, "It was just here where we stand that I was years ago digging up thorns for fuel, when a Turkoman rode out from the point of the hill yonder, and riding full tilt came up to me cimeter in hand, and said, 'You can work?' 'Yes.' 'Then come up here.' And knowing resist-

ance to be useless, I gave him my hand, and he pulled me up on to the horse behind him. Seizing my hands, he tied them around his waist on my back, and then galloped off as rapidly as he had come. When we had gone so far that he felt no fear of pursuit, he ordered me to dismount. My hands were tied together on my back. He then tied a cord round my neck, fastening it to the tail of his horse, and told me to keep up or take the consequences of lagging. When the man saw that I was faint he gave me a little water from the leathern bottle which he carried. At night he gave me a bit of bread about as large as my hand, which was all the food I had for nearly three days. By the time we reached the first village he had become convinced of my powers of endurance.

"My father," he continued, "trades with Turkomans, and is useful to them in negotiating for the redemption of captives. He can go anywhere among them, and is often a guide. He succeeded in his efforts to ransom me. It was agreed that he should pay a hundred tomans, and take me in my master's tent. The money was paid and we started for home, but had not gone half way when another band of Turkomans coming upon us carried us off to another village."

Now that we may not detain the reader too long on the border, let us take a guide and a good horse, and dash over the few miles which separate us from the wild Turkomans. We will abandon the Persian chapar horse, for the Shah has no post in that direction, and post-offices and post-stamps are unknown there. We will buy here a good horse, and so be able to go and return as we like.

We may change our clothes for a native costume, and shave our head, or we may become a dervish as others have done. But if we know our men, or are known not to be a political agent, and especially not to be a Russian, it is just possible that we may go in our own clothes, but should they take us for a Russian that would be the end of us. As we speak English, and there is a fellow-feeling between us and the Turkoman, so far at least as the Russian is concerned, we shall go with more boldness than would become other people. The distance is not great, so we shall need to take no great supply of food and clothing.

THE TROUBLES OF A CHINAMAN.

BY JULES VERNE.

CHAPTER II.—ANTECEDENTS.

KIN-FO had a special reason for giving a farewell dinner at Canton. Having spent the greater part of his youth in the capital of Quang-Tung, he had, as a rich and generous young man, formed many friends there, and was anxious to pay them a compliment on this occasion. But nearly all of them had been dispersed on their various paths of life, and only the four already mentioned remained to accept the courteous invitation. Kin-Fo's proper residence was at Shang-Hai; he had merely come to Canton for a few days' change of air and scene, and was about, that very evening, to take the steamboat that called at the principal ports along the coasts, and to return to his "yamen."

As a matter of course, Wang, the philosopher had accompanied him; he was a tutor who rarely quitted his pupil's side. Tim had not been very much beside the mark when he irreverently called him "a theoretical machine," for he was never weary of propounding his sententious maxims, although it must be owned that they ordinarily had as little effect upon Kin-Fo as is proverbially represented by water on a duck's back.

Kin-Fo was a very fair type of the Chinese of the North, who have never become allied with the Tartars. Neither his father's family nor his mother's had a drop of Tartar blood in their veins, and for purity of breed his match could not be found anywhere in the