

deposit large quantities of honey in the rocks and trees; sea and river fish and turtles abound.

The art of mining is little understood, but there are stores of iron, copper, lead, tin, sulphur, gypsum, lime stone, fine clays, and prodigious quantities of rock and sea salt.

FROM THE UNITED SERVICE JOURNAL:

SKIRMISH IN PERSIA.

By Captain James Edward Alexander, (late) 16th Lancers.

'May Ullah be our guide in this expedition!' said Abdoolah Khan to his Aga; 'the Shah, the threshold of the world's glory, has given us a difficult part to play, but Inshallah (please God) we will burn the fathers of the Russians, and cut off a detachment or two before they can fall back into Georgia.' 'By my father's beard!' replied the Aga, 'we will show them what it is to trespass on the territory of the true believers. Gorumsak, the rascals! did they imagine they could pitch their tents on the plains of Iran, consume its fruits, and trample on its corn with impunity? No, no, the unclean Gours will drink of the sherbet of death by our blades, and their hearts will be cold ere long! But Abdoolah Khan, in the name of Ullah, let us make some play, look here is a Meidan (or plain) fit for exercising Toorkomanee steeds;' and striking the angle of his broad stirrup into the horse's flank, and calling out a Delhi-Khan, or hair-brained young fellow from the troop, the gallant Aga dashes after him with his light bamboo spear in rest.

The Aga, like his chief, was arrayed in a blue cloth surcoat, fitting tight to the shape, and over it was a steel cuirass; his head was defended by a metal skull-cap terminating in a spike, and from it streamed two or three long feathers; chin-mail covered the ears and hung down on his shoulders. His full scarlet trowsers, or shulwas, were met below the knees by brown sharp-toed boots; a pair of pistols with chased silver butts, and an ivory-hilted dagger, were in his shawl sash, and under his left saddle flap was a Damascus blade. The Delhi-Khan, and his five hundred comrades, wore black caps of Bochara lamb-skin, nicely punched in at the top to show the silk or shawl lining; cloth-surcoats of different colours, and their arms were, lances, long guns and curved sabres with ivory handles.

'Ya Ullah!' cried the Aga to the Delhi-Khan; 'if you don't bestir yourself, I shall send you to Eblis.' The youth replied by unslinging his topkai and continuing at full speed: he drew the ball, and turning completely round in his saddle, he levelled and fired at the Aga, who shaking his spear over his shoulder made a feint at him, then grasping his spear with his bridle hand, he drew forth a jareed or javelin, which he darted at the Kelhi-Khan, who avoided it by stooping to his saddle bow, then wheeling round he became in his turn the pursuer. They thus continued for some time making a display of their Parthian horsemanship, and circling round and round each other, whilst the rest looked on in admiration, as they continued their march, and occasionally shouting, Shabash, excellently done! Mashallahs, praise be to be God!

The mists of the morning were rolling off the hills 'like a garment' as the party of Kizzilbash ascended a steep and rugged road; the stones were wet and slippery, but the horsemen heeded them not; and throwing their reins on their horses' necks, they left them to pick out their own way: then producing their flint and steel they lighted their chebouks or long Turkish pipes, and consoled themselves with the aromatic fumes of Shirez tobacco. The Khan called his musician, who clearing his throat, took out a paper from his breast, and struck up a wild though plaintive air, which was echoed from the opposite cliffs. But a stop was soon put to his singing, by an exclamation from one of the foremost, of the party, who pointed to a pinnacle of the rocks overhead, on which was seated an eagle, which unconcernedly eyed the horsemen from his commanding height. The Khan galloped below him, and was taking aim, when the king of birds rose majestically in the air and the bullet whistled harmlessly past him.

The precipices were now clothed with trees of a gigantic size, consisting of pines, oaks, beech and maple. Nature seemed to have chosen this district to revel in unrestrained grandeur, for her works were on

the most magnificent scale, and the rocks were suited to the vegetation. Life too, was given to this mountain landscape by a swollen torrent, which rushed in white foam and with noisy impetuosity over the ledges which obstructed its progress to the sea; on the steep banks, and far below the Kizzilbash, coveys of red-legged partridges were observed running actively among the stenes, and picking up the scattered seeds of the wild oat.

The horsemen continued to wind for some time among the hills, till a sudden turn of the road brought them in sight of the wide expanse of the Caspian. It was a glorious prospect. Immense masses of black forests, inhabited by tigers, skirted the shores, in which, since the waters of the deluge subsided and left the ark on the hoary head of Agridagh, the sound of the hatchet has seldom been heard; silence brooded over them except when the tempest caused the foliage to wave like fields of grain, as the branches groaned and wailed in struggling with the blast, whilst the roar of the brindled tenants resounded through the gloomy recesses. No wreaths of smoke curling over the trees indicated human habitations, or cleared spots the labours of the agriculturist. These ancient woods seemed abandoned to wild beasts, who ranged them unharmed by the bold hunters. Into the sea, headlands advanced and formed deep bays, in one of which the white sails of a vessel appeared like a sea-bird skimming the waters, whilst a lively breeze had set the billows in motion, and white-crested they rolled to the beach.

'Alhumdullah, praise be to God,' said the Khan, 'here is a caravanserai at last, though the graves of those who allowed it to go to ruin should be defiled; however, by the head of Ali, it is better than nothing; quick, you lazy furaches, and sweep a place in an upper room, and spread my numid (belt) and carpet, for I am as tired as if I had sent an hundred Gours to the Father of Evil.'

The caravanserai was, as usual, a square stone enclosure, surrounding a yard; round three of the sides of the court were pizzas divided into rooms, and behind them were large stables for the horses of wayfarers: on the fourth side of the building was the arched gateway, over which were a few small rooms, but only one of these was habitable, as the ceiling of the others had fallen in. The sturdy Khan dismounting with a groan, clambered to the upper apartments and immediately threw himself on his carpets; a boy then handed him a fresh caeon, the grateful fumes of which, with some strong coffee, considerably revived him, and he reclined contentedly stroking his beard and talking to himself, till the Aga appeared simultaneously with the evening's meal.

A long chintz cloth being spread on the ground before the two chiefs, an attendant brought in a metal basin and ewer, and after they had washed their hands and eaten some ripe fruit, two broad flour cakes were placed on the cloth, and a tray of smoking rice; on seeing which the Khan pronounced the bismillah or grace, and plunging his hand into the white heap he brought out a fowl, which was quickly dismembered, and dipping portions into cups of sauce, in a few minutes the fowl became a skeleton; spoonfuls of cool sherbet having washed it down, the caleons were again produced, and they sat comfortably together, till the sound of angry voices, which had for some time been heard from the court below, becoming louder compelled the Aga to descend and quell the tumult.

He found the troopers quarrelling about their quarters for the night; the younger and more active had seized on what the elders considered was their right, and from words they were proceeding to blows, when the Aga producing his jareed, laid about him on either side, softening the shoulders of the high contending parties, abusing their female relatives, and turning out those who could not be accommodated within the walls of the caravanserai, to bivouac under some trees outside.

Before betaking himself to his repose, the Khan looked out from his window, and observed the mountains before him to be capped with a mass of angry, black clouds; they were piled confusedly on one another, and the light grey scud was drifted swiftly across them; the wind, cold and moist, swept over the caravanserai, and sighed on the untenanted chambers, and the face of nature bespoke a coming storm. The Persians in the

court quickly rolled up their carpets, and huddled together into the stables beside their horses, all of which were now turned out and their places occupied by men; a few warning drops of rain were then succeeded by a torrent, the distant thunder growled and reverberated among the hills, and the lightning showed at frequent intervals their rugged outlines; the noise of the conflicting elements was so great that it was difficult to hear oneself speak, and though many essayed to sleep, few were visited by 'Nature's best restorer.'

The storm was at its height, when a peasant in a red fur cap and coarse blue garments, with the rain streaming from his person, sought shelter in the caravanserai. 'Punah be Khooda, God be my protection!' said he, 'what a night! surely the spirits of mischief are abroad, and are frightening us with their gambols. Wullah! I hope they will not harm my poor sheep; but they may amuse themselves with these Russians if they like, and if they sweep them into the sea it would be a happy riddance to our village.' 'Russians! what Russians?' exclaimed half a dozen voices eagerly, 'are we near the Pedursug?' Near! ay, within two fursungs of the devourers of unclean meat,—may they be confounded!

The information that a party of 300 of the enemy occupied a village within two hours' march of the caravanserai, was quickly communicated to the Khan; a council of war was held, the peasant was closely interrogated as to the position of the Roos, and after a short deliberation it was determined that three hours before daylight the march should be resumed, and the enemy if possible surprised. Sleep was no longer courted by the Kizzilbash, but a general inspection of arms took place, their pieces newly primed and sabres sharpened with care; there was not much talking except now and then a 'Toof be resh' would be heard, and one would exclaim to his neighbour 'I spit on the beards of the rascals, and mean to secure at least half a dozen of their dirty heads,' some again attempted to strike up a lively air, but the strain soon became grave and touched on scenes of domestic happiness and of those who, sitting at the solitary hearth, might mourn the absence of the soldier, husband, or son, whose presence was once light to their eyes.

At the appointed time, the troopers led forth their steeds and mounted in silence, the stars and the dying embers of their fires scarcely affording sufficient light to enable each man to distinguish his charger. The gurgling of a few caleons were heard, and a few opium boxes were used as the Kizzilbash mustered outside the gateway, and then cautiously wended their way under the guidance of the peasant, who ran beside the stirrup of the Khan. The Aga counted the files as they rode along, and rated soundly some careless youths, who had lingered behind to collect their light baggage. The march was continued in anxiety and with hearts beating high with expectation, till at the termination of the plain which the party had been traversing for some time, and at the bottom of some broken ground, a distant twinkling light was descried, on which the guide touching the knee of the Khan, said, 'Yonder are the Gours,' and a halt was immediately ordered.

The Russian detachment, over which destruction seemed now impending, had occupied an advanced position near the Caspian, and on the breaking out of the late war had received orders to retire by forced marches beyond the Araxes into Georgia. In complying with the orders to retrograde, the Russians, after a fatiguing march, had reached the above-mentioned village, into which they gladly threw themselves, and occupied it for the night in fancied security. Sentinels were posted at the two entrances to the village, which communicated with a road which led through it. But the commandant, careless from fatigue, had neglected to observe that there were certain breaches in the walls which ought also to have been guarded, and, allowing his officers and men to scatter themselves in the empty houses which the inhabitants had abandoned, the detachment sought repose.

A watchful sentinel, wrapped in his great coat, and pacing backwards and forwards at his post, fancied he hears a dull sound at some distance from him on the plain, he listens, but a gust of wind agitates the leaves of a tree near him, and distracts him from what had excited his attention. The breeze blowing over the damp ground chills his frame, and he attempts to beguile the tedium of the night hour by humming a plaintive air of the Ukran, and impatiently he looks forward to the time of his relief; suddenly he is struck down by the blow of a sabre from behind,