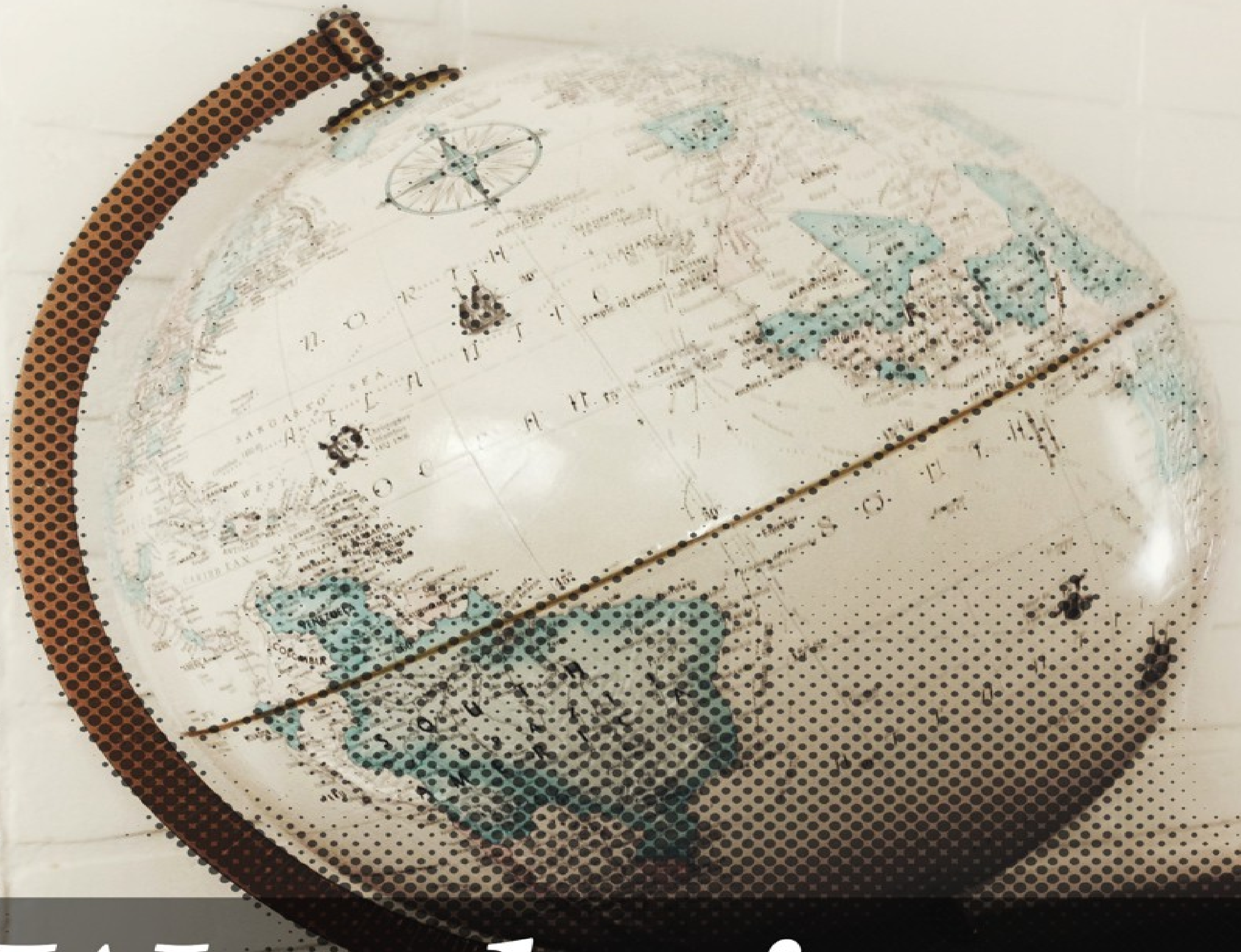
Richard Francis Sir Burton



Wanderings in Three Continents

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Published by Good Press, 2022

goodpress@okpublishing.info

EAN 4066338112118

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PREFACE

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BURTON was a many-sided man. The following volume of posthumous essays reveals him in the aspect in which he was best known to the world—as a traveller and explorer. It will add comparatively little to the knowledge of the Burton student; to the general reader it will contain much that is new, for though Burton wrote and published many bulky volumes of travel in years gone by, none of them assumed a popular form, and it may be doubted if any, save his "Pilgrimage to Meccah and El Medinah," reached the outer circle of the great reading public. Most of his books are now out of copyright, many are out of print, and few are easily obtainable. This volume, therefore, will supply a need, in that it gives in a popular form a consensus of his most important travels in three continents. It will also, I hope, remind his countrymen of the achievements of this remarkable man, and bring home to many a deeper sense of what we have lost in him. This was the view taken by Lady Burton, who had hoped to incorporate these essays in her memorial edition of "The Labours and Wisdom of Sir Richard Burton," a work cut short by her death. Upon me, therefore, has devolved the task of editing them and preparing them for publication. They form the second volume of the Burton MSS. which have been published since Lady Burton's death, and I am the more encouraged to give them to the world by the success which attended the previous volume, "The Jew, the Gypsy, and El Islam." The reception of this book, though published under obvious difficulties, and eight years after the author's death, showed that the interest in the great traveller's work was in no degree abated.

The essays that follow were all prepared by Burton himself, and most of them were read by him in the form of lectures before sundry geographical and scientific societies at different times. For instance, the description of his expeditions to El Medinah, Meccah, Harar, and Dahomé were delivered by him as a course of four lectures before the Emperor and Empress of Brazil at Rio in 1866. The account of his Central African expedition was read, I believe, at Bath, the one on Damascus and Palmyra at Edinburgh, the one on the Mormons in London. I have deleted the local and topical allusions, which arose from the circumstances under which they were delivered; I have filled in a word or two where the notes were too sketchy; but that is all. Otherwise, the manuscript is reproduced exactly as it left the author's hands. In his own words, simply and

unaffectedly, Burton here gives an epitome of his principal travels in three continents.

In this condensed form the essays necessarily lose something. On the other hand, they gain much. Careful and accurate as all Burton's books of travel were, his passion for detail sometimes led him into tediousness. He crammed his notebooks so full that he had occasionally a difficulty in digesting the large mass of information he had acquired. He was addicted to excessive annotation. For instance, in his book on the Mormons, the large text occupied on some pages only three lines, the rest of the page being broken up by closely printed notes, extracts from Mormon books and sermons, which can only be considered as superfluous. Extraneous matter of this kind has been omitted here, and the result is a clear gain to the narrative.

The book covers the period from 1853 to 1870, the most active years of Burton's active life. It opens most fitly with an account of his pilgrimage to El Medinah and Meccah. This famous expedition was the turning-point of Burton's career; in a sense it may be said to have been the beginning of it. Though he had already shown much promise and some performance, and was known to many in India as a linguist, soldier, writer, and man of unusual ability, he was yet unknown to the greater world outside. But after his pilgrimage to Meccah his fame became world-wide and enduring. I say this in no spirit of exaggeration. When all that Burton wrote and wrought has passed away into that limbo of forgetfulness which awaits the labours of even the most distinguished among us, this at least will be remembered to his honour, that he was the first Englishman to penetrate to the Holy of Holies at Meccah. I write the first Englishman advisedly. Burckhardt, a Swiss explorer, had gone part of the way before him, and since his day one or two have the made the pilgrimage, but, though it was a sufficiently difficult task when they performed it, it was much more difficult when Burton did it in 1853. He was not a man to do things by halves. He made the pilgrimage thoroughly, living absolutely the life of the Moslems, wearing their clothes, eating their food, joining in their prayers, sacrifices, and ritual, and speaking their language; he did all this, carrying his life in his hand, for one false step, one prayer unsaid, one trifling item of the shibboleth omitted, and the dog of an infidel who had dared to profane the sanctuary of the Prophet would have been found out, and his bones would have whitened the desert sand. Not that Burton went to profane the tomb of the Prophet. Far from it. From his early manhood he had been a sympathetic student of the higher aspects of El Islam. He had come to see that in it, above and beyond all the corruptions and abuses which clung around the Saving Faith, there existed an occult force which had made it a power among men. Not only in his achievement, but in the way he did it, Burton manifested those great qualities which have made the English race what it is; he showed tenacity,

pluck, and strength of purpose, and, withal, he accomplished his purpose unobtrusively. None knew until he came back how great a task he had achieved.

It was the same with all that Burton undertook. He did his work thoroughly, and he did it without any beating of drums or blaring of trumpets. “Deeds, not words,” was his rule; “Honour, not honours,” his motto. His expedition to Harar the following year was almost as arduous as his pilgrimage to Meccah. No European had ever before passed the gates of the city in Somaliland. But Burton passed them, and stayed in Harar some days. Again, his long and dangerous expedition into Central Africa, which occupied nearly three years, showed in a marvellous manner his resource, his courage, and his powers of endurance. On the unfortunate controversy which afterwards arose between himself and Speke it is not necessary to enter here; but this much, at least, may be said. In the discovery of Lake Tanganyika Burton was the pioneer; his was the brain which planned and commanded the expedition, and carried it through to a successful issue. It was he who first achieved with inadequate means and insufficient escort what Livingstone, Cameron, Speke, Grant, Baker, and Stanley achieved later.

Of the remaining essays there is little to be said. Burton’s description of the Mormons in Great Salt Lake City printed here is, I think, very much better than his bulky book on the same subject, “The City of the Saints.” In the larger work Burton ventured on prophecy, always unsafe, and predicted a great future for Mormondom and polygamy, a prediction which has not so far been verified by events. On the other hand, this account of his mission to Dahomé certainly loses by excessive condensation. “The Trip up the Congo” and “The Interior of Brazil” are lightning sketches of expeditions which involved much preparation and trouble to carry them through. “Palmyra” is a formal survey rather than an account of an expedition. It is interesting, as it marks an epoch in (one had almost written, the end of) Burton’s active life. In 1870 he was suddenly recalled from Damascus by Lord Granville, and his career was broken.

After his appointment to the post of Consul at Trieste he went on some expeditions, notably to Midian, but they were tame indeed compared with those to Meccah, Harar, and Central Africa. At Trieste the eagle’s wings were clipped, and the man who had great energy and ability, a knowledge of more than a score of languages, and an unrivalled experience of Eastern life and literature, was suffered to drag out eighteen years in the obscurity of a second-rate seaport town. True, it was not all lost time, for ample leisure was given him at Trieste for his literary labours. If he had been thrown in a more active sphere, his great masterpiece, “Alf Laylah Wa Laylah” (“The Arabian Nights”) might never have seen the light.

But when all is said and done, the most fruitful years of Burton’s career, the richest in promise and performance, were those that began with the pilgrimage

to Meccah and ended with his recall from Damascus. They were the very heart of his life: they are the years covered by this book.

W. H. WILKINS.

October 1901.

EL MEDINAH AND MECCAH
1853

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THE VISITATION OF EL MEDINAH

THE Moslem's pilgrimage is a familiar word to the Christian's ear, yet how few are acquainted with the nature or the signification of the rite! Unto the present day, learned men—even those who make a pretence to some knowledge of the East—still confound Meccah, the birthplace, with El Medinah, the burial-place, of Mohammed, the Arab law-giver. "The Prophet's tomb at Meccah" is a mistake which even the best-informed of our journals do not disdain to make.

Before, however, entering upon the journey which procured for me the title "haji," it is necessary for me to dispose of a few preliminaries which must savour of the personal. The first question that suggests itself is, "What course of study enabled an Englishman to pass unsuspected through the Moslem's exclusive and jealously guarded Holy Land?"

I must premise that in the matter of assuming an Oriental nationality, Nature was somewhat propitious to me. Golden locks and blue eyes, however *per se* desirable, would have been sad obstacles to progress

in swarthy Arabia. And to what Nature had begun, art contributed by long years of laborious occupation.

Finding Oxford, with its Greek and Latin, its mysteries of δε and γαρ, and its theology and mathematics, exceedingly monotonous, I shipped myself for India and entered life in the 18th Sepoy Regiment of the Bombay Presidency. With sundry intervals of travel, my career between 1843 and 1849 was spent in Scinde. This newly conquered province was very Mohammedan, and the conquerors were compelled, during the work of organisation, to see more of the conquered than is usual in England's East Indian possession. Sir Charles Napier, of gallant memory, our Governor and Commander-in-Chief, honoured me with a staff appointment, and humoured my whim by allowing me to wander about the new land as a canal engineer employed upon its intricate canal system. My days and nights were thus spent among the people, and within five years I was enabled to pass examinations in six Eastern languages.

In 1849 (March 30th-September 5th) an obstinate rheumatic ophthalmia, the result of overwork, sent me back to Europe, where nearly three years were passed before I was pronounced cured. Then, thoroughly tired of civilisation and living "dully sluggardised at home," and pining for the breath of the desert and the music of the date-palm, I volunteered in the autumn of 1852 to explore the great waste of Eastern and Central Arabia—that huge

white blot which still disgraces our best maps. But the Court of Directors of the then Honourable East India Company, with their mild and amiable chairman, after deliberation, stoutly refused. They saw in me only another victim, like Stoddard Connolly and the brave brothers Wyburd, rushing on his own destruction and leaving behind him friends and family to trouble with their requisitions the peace and quiet of the India House.

What remained to me but to prove that what might imperil others was to me safe? Supplied with the sinews of travel by the Royal Geographical Society, curious to see what men are mostly content to hear of only—namely, Moslem inner life in a purely Mohammedan land—and longing to set foot within the mysterious Meccah which no vacation tourist had ever yet measured, sketched, photographed, and described, I resolved, *coûte qu'il coûte*, to make the attempt in my old character of a dervish. The safest as well as the most interesting time would be during the pilgrimage season.

The Moslem's hajj, or pilgrimage, means, I must premise, "aspiration," and expresses man's conviction that he is but a wayfarer on earth wending towards a nobler world. This explains the general belief of the men in sandaled shoon that the greater their hardships, the sorer to travel the road to Jordan, the higher will be their reward in heaven. The pilgrim is urged by the voice of his soul—"O thou, toiling so fiercely for worldly pleasure and for

transitory profit, wilt thou endure nothing to win a more lasting boon?” Hence it is that pilgrimage is common to all ancient faiths. The Sabæans, or old Arabians, visited the Pyramids as the sepulchres of Seth and his son Sabi, the founder of their sect. The classical philosophers wandered through the Valley of the Nile. The Jews annually went up to Jerusalem. The Tartar Buddhists still journey to distant Lamaserais, and the Hindus to Egypt, to Tibet, to Gaya, on the Ganges, and to the inhospitable Caucasus. The spirit of pilgrimage animated mediæval Europe, and a learned Jesuit traveller considers the processions of the Roman Catholic Church modern vestiges of the olden rite.

El Islam—meaning the covenant in virtue of which men earn eternal life by good works in this world—requires of all its votaries daily ablution and prayer, almsgiving on certain occasions, one month’s yearly fast, and at least one pilgrimage to the House of Allah at Meccah and the mountain of Ararat. This first, and often the single, visit is called Hajjat el Islam, or pilgrimage of being a Moslem, and all those subsequently performed are regarded as works of supererogation. The rite, however, is incumbent only upon those who possess a sufficiency of health or wealth. El Islam is a creed remarkable for common sense.

The journey to El Medinah is not called hajj, but ziyarat, meaning a ceremonial visitation. Thus the difference between worship due to the Creator and

homage rendered to the creature is steadily placed and kept before the Moslem's eyes. Some sects—the Wahhabi, or Arabian Puritans, for instance—even condemn as impious all intercessions between man and his Maker, especially the prayers at the Prophet's grave. The mass, however, of the Mohammedan Church, if such expression be applicable to a system which repudiates an ecclesiastical body, considers this visitation a "practice of the faith, and the most effectual way of drawing near to Allah through the Prophet Mohammed."

The Moslem's literature has many a thick volume upon the minutiæ of pilgrimage and visitation. All four Sumni, or orthodox schools—viz., Hunafi, Shafli, Maliki, and Hanbali—differ in unimportant points one with the other. Usually pilgrims, especially those performing the rite for the first time, begin with Meccah and end with El Medinah. But there is no positive command on the subject. In these days pilgrims from the north countries—Egypt and Syria, Damascus and Bagdad—pass through the Prophet's burial-place going to and coming from Meccah, making a visitation each time. Voyagers from the south—as East Africa, India, and Java—must often deny themselves, on account of danger and expense, the spiritual advantages of prayer at Mohammed's tomb.

I have often been asked if the pilgrim receives any written proof that he has performed his pilgrimage. Formerly the Sherif (descendant of Hasan), or Prince,

of Meccah gave a certificate to those who could afford it, and early in the present century the names of all who paid the fee were registered by a scribe. All that has passed. But the ceremonies are so complicated and the localities so peculiar that no book can thoroughly teach them. The pretended pilgrim would readily be detected after a short cross-questioning of the real Simon Pure. As facilities of travel increase, and the rite becomes more popular, no pilgrim, unless he comes from the edge of the Moslem world, cares to bind on the green turban which his grandfather affected. Few also style themselves haji, unless for an especial reason—as an evidence of reformed life, for instance, or a sign of being a serious person.

Some also have inquired if I was not the first "Christian" who ever visited the Moslem's Holy Land. The learned Gibbon asserted—"Our notions of Meccah must be drawn from the Arabians. As no unbeliever is permitted to enter the city, our travellers are silent."[1] But Haji Yunus (Ludovico di Bartema) performed the pilgrimage in A.D. 1503; Joseph Pitts, of Exeter, in 1680, Ali Bey el Abbasi (the Catalonian Badia) in 1807, Haji Mohammed (Giovanni Finati, of Ferrara) in 1811, and the excellent Swiss traveller Burckhardt in 1814, all passed safely through the Hejaz, or Holy Land. I mention those only who have written upon the subject. Those who have not must be far more numerous. In fact, any man may become a haji by prefacing his pilgrimage with a

solemn and public profession of faith before the Kazi in Cairo or Damascus; or, simpler still, by applying through his Consulate to be put under the protection of the Amir el Haji, or Commander of the Pilgrim Caravan.

If I did anything new, it was this—my pilgrimage was performed as by one of the people. El Islam theoretically encourages, but practically despises and distrusts, the burma, or renegade. Such a convert is allowed to see as little as possible, and is ever suspected of being a spy. He is carefully watched night and day, and in troublous times he finds it difficult to travel between Meccah and El Medinah. Far be it from me to disparage the labours of my predecessors. But Bartema travelled as a Mameluke in the days when Mamelukes were Christian slaves, Pitts was a captive carried to the pilgrimage by his Algerine master, Badia's political position was known to all the authorities, Finati was an Albanian soldier, and Burckhardt revealed himself to the old Pacha Mohammed Ali.

As regards the danger of pilgrimage in the case of the non-Moslem, little beyond the somewhat extensive chapter of accidents is to be apprehended by one conversant with Moslem prayers and formulæ, manners and customs, and who possesses a sufficient guarantee of orthodoxy. It is, however, absolutely indispensable to be a Mohammedan in externals. Neither the Koran nor the Sultan enjoins the killing of Hebrew or Christian intruders;

nevertheless, in 1860, a Jew, who refused to repeat the Creed, was crucified by the Meccan populace, and in the event of a pilgrim declaring himself to be an infidel the authorities would be powerless to protect him.

The question of *Cui bono?*—of what good I did to others or to myself by the adventure—is not so easily answered. My account of El Medinah is somewhat fuller than that of Burckhardt, whose health was breaking when he visited it. And our caravan's route between the Holy Cities was not the beaten track along the Red Sea, but the little-known eastern or desert road. Some critics certainly twitted me with having "turned Turk"; one might turn worse things. For the rest, man is ever most tempted by the useless and the impossible.

To appear in character upon the scene of action many precautions were necessary. Egypt in those days was a land of passports and policemen; the *haute-police* was not inferior to that of any European country. By the advice of a brother-officer, Captain Grindley, I assumed the Eastern dress at my lodgings in London, and my friend accompanied me as interpreter to Southampton. On April 4th, 1853, a certain Shaykh Abdullah (to wit, myself) left home in the P. & O. Company's steamer Bengal, and before the end of the fortnight landed at Alexandria. It was not exactly pleasant for the said personage to speak broken English the whole way, and rigorously to

refuse himself the pleasure of addressing the other sex; but under the circumstances it was necessary.

Fortunately, on board the Bengal was John Larking, a well-known Alexandrian. He was in my secret, and I was received in his house, where he gave me a little detached pavilion and treated me as a munshi, or language-master. My profession among the people was that of a doctor. The Egyptians are a medico-ridden race; all are more or less unhealthy, and they could not look upon my phials and pill-boxes without yearning for their contents. An Indian doctor was a novelty to them; Franks they despised; but how resist a man who had come so far, from east and west? Men, women, and children besieged my door, by which means I could see the people face to face, especially that portion of which Europeans as a rule know only the worst. Even learned Alexandrians, after witnessing some of my experiments in mesmerism and the magic mirror, opined that the stranger was a manner of holy man gifted with preternatural powers. An old man sent to offer me his daughter in marriage—my sanctity compelled me to decline the honour—and a middle-aged lady offered me a hundred piastres (nearly one pound sterling) to stay at Alexandria and superintend the restoration of her blind left eye.

After a month pleasantly spent in the little garden of roses, jasmine, and oleanders, I made in early June a move towards Cairo. The first thing was to procure a passport; I had neglected, through ignorance, to

bring one from England. It was not without difficulty, involving much unclean dressing and expenditure of horrible English, that I obtained from H.B.M.'s Consul at Alexandria a certificate declaring me to be an Indo-British subject named Abdullah, by profession a doctor, and, to judge from frequent blanks in the document, not distinguished by any remarkable conformation of eyes, nose, or cheek. This paper, duly countersigned by the zabit, or police magistrate, would carry me anywhere within the Egyptian frontier.

At Alexandria also I provided a few necessaries for the pilgrimage: item—a change or two of clothing; a substantial leather money belt to carry my gold in; a little cotton bag for silver and small change, kept ready for use in the breast pocket; a zemzimiyah, or water-bag of goatskin; a huge cotton umbrella of Cairene make, brightly yellow, like an overgrown marigold; a coarse Persian rug, which acted as bed, table, chair, and oratory; a pea-green box, with red and yellow flowers, capable of standing falls from a camel twice a day, and therefore well fitted for a medicine chest; and, lastly, the only peculiar article—viz., the shroud, without which no one sets out *en route* to Meccah. This *memento mori* is a piece of cotton six feet long by five broad. It is useful, for instance, when a man is dangerously sick or wounded; the caravan, of course, cannot wait, and to loiter behind is destruction. The patient, therefore, is ceremonially washed, wrapped up in his kafan, partly

covered with sand, and left to his fate. It is hard to think of such an end without horror; the torturing thirst of a wound, the sun heating the brain to madness, and, worst of all—for they do not wait for death—the attacks of the jackal, the vulture, and the ravens of the wilds. This shroud was duly sprinkled, as is the custom, with the holy water of the Zemzem well at Meccah. It later came to a bad end amongst the villainous Somal in Eastern Africa.

Equipped in a dervish's frock, I took leave of my kind host and set out, a third-class passenger, upon a steamer facetiously known as the Little Asthmatic. In those days the rail had not invaded Egypt. We had an unpleasant journey up the Mahmadiyah Canal and the Nile, which is connected by it with Alexandria. The usual time was thirty hours. We took three mortal days and nights. We were nearly wrecked at the then unfinished Barage, we saw nothing of the Pyramids but their tops, and it was with a real feeling of satisfaction that we moored alongside of the old tumble-down suburb, Bulak.

My dervishhood was perfectly successful. I happened by chance to touch the elbow of an Anglo-Indian officer, and he publicly and forcibly condemned my organs of vision. And I made an acquaintance and a friend on board. The former was a shawl and cotton merchant, Meyan Khudabaksh Namdar, of Lahore, who, as the caravanserais were full of pilgrims, lodged me at his house for a fortnight. The conversations that passed between us

were published two years later in 1855.[2] They clearly pointed to the mutiny which occurred two years afterwards, and this, together with my frankness about the Suez Canal,[3] did not tend to make me a favourite with the then effete Government of India.

My friend was a Turkish trader, named Haji Wali-el-din. He was then a man about forty-five, of middle stature, with a large round head closely shaven, a bull neck, limbs sturdy as a Saxon's, a thin red beard, and handsome features beaming benevolence. A curious dry humour he had, delighting in "quizzing," but in so quiet, quaint, and solemn a way that before you knew him you could scarce divine his drift. He presently found for me rooms next his own at the wakalah, or caravanserai, called Jemeliyah, in the Greek quarter, and I tried to repay his kindness by counselling him in an unpleasant Consular suit.

When we lived under the same roof, the haji and I became inseparable. We walked together and dined together, and spent the evening at a mosque or other place of public pastime. Sometimes we sat among the dervishes; but they are a dangerous race, travelled and inquisitive. Meanwhile I continued to practise my profession—the medical—and devoted myself several hours a day to study in the Azhar Mosque, sitting under the learned Shaykh Mohammed Ali Attar. The better to study the "humours," I also became a grocer and druggist, and my little shop, a mere hole in the wall, was a perfect

gem of Nilotic groceries. But although I sold my wares under cost price to fair customers, my chief clients were small boys and girls, who came, halfpence in hand, to buy sugar and pepper; so one day, determining to sink the thirty shillings which my stock in trade had stood me, I locked the wooden shutter that defended my establishment and made it over to my shaykh.

The haji and I fasted together during the month of Ramazan. That year it fell in the torrid June, and it always makes the Moslem unhealthy and unamiable. At the end preparations were to be made for departure Meccah-wards, and the event was hastened by a convivial *séance* with a bacchanalian captain of Albanians, which made the gossips of the quarter wonder what manner of an Indian doctor had got amongst them.

I was fortunate enough, however, to hire the services of Shaykh Nur, a quiet East Indian, whose black skin made society suppose him to be my slave. Never suspecting my nationality till after my return from Meccah, he behaved honestly enough; but when absolved by pilgrimage from his past sins, Haji Nur began to rob me so boldly that we were compelled to part. I also made acquaintance with certain sons of the Holy Cities—seven men from El Medinah and Meccah—who, after a begging-trip to Constantinople, were returning to their homes. Having doctored them and lent them some trifling sums, I was invited by Shaykh Hamid El Shamman to stay with him at El

Medinah, and by the boy Mohammed El Basyuni to lodge at his mother's house in Meccah.

They enabled me to collect proper stores for the journey. These consisted of tea, coffee, loaf sugar, biscuits, oil, vinegar, tobacco, lanterns, cooking-pots, and a small bell-shaped tent costing twelve shillings. The provisions were placed in a kafas, or hamper, of palm sticks, my drugs and dress in a sahharah, or wooden box measuring some three and a half feet each way, covered with cowskin, and the lid fitting into the top. And finally, not wishing to travel by the vans then allotted to the overland passengers, I hired two dromedaries and their attendant Bedouins, who for the sum of ten shillings each agreed to carry me across the desert between Cairo and Suez.

At last, after abundant trouble, all was ready. At 3 p.m., July 1st, 1853, my friend Haji Wali embraced me heartily, and so did my poor old shaykh, who, despite his decrepitude and my objections, insisted upon accompanying me to the city gate. I will not deny having felt a tightening of the heart as their honest faces and forms faded in the distance. All the bystanders ejaculated, "Allah bless thee, Y'all Hajj (O pilgrim!), and restore thee to thy family and thy friends."

We rode hard over the stretch of rock and hard clay which has since yielded to that monumental work, the Suez Canal. There was no *ennui* upon the road: to the traveller there was an interest in the wilderness—

Where love is liberty and Nature law—

unknown to Cape seas and Alpine glaciers and even the boundless prairie. I felt as if looking once more upon the face of a friend, and my two Bedouins —though the old traveller described their forefathers as “folke full of all evylle condiciouns”—were excellent company. At midnight we halted for a little rest near the Central Station, and after dark on the next evening I passed through the tumble-down gateway of Suez and found a shelter in the Wakalah Tirjis—the George Inn. My Meccan and Medinah friends were already installed there, and the boy Mohammed El Basyuni had joined me on the road.

It was not so easy to embark at Suez. In those days the greater body of pilgrims marched round the head of the Red Sea. Steamers were rare, and in the spirit of protection the Bey, or Governor, had orders to obstruct us till near the end of the season. Most Egyptian high officials sent their boats laden with pious passengers up the Nile, whence they returned freighted with corn. They naturally did their best to force upon us the delays and discomforts of what is called the Kussayr (Cosseir) line. And as those who travelled by the land route spent their money fifteen days longer in Egyptian territory than they would have done if allowed to embark at Suez, the Bey assisted them in the former and obstructed them in the latter case.

We were delayed in the George Inn four mortal days and nights amidst all the plagues of Egypt. At

last we found a sambuk, or small-decked vessel, about to start, and for seven dollars each we took places upon the poop, the only possible part in the dreadful summer months. The Silk El Zahab, or Golden Thread, was probably a lineal descendant from the ships of Solomon harboured in Ezion Geber. It was about fifty tons burden, and we found ninety-seven, instead of sixty, the proper number of passengers. The farce of a quarter-deck ten feet by eight accommodated eighteen of us, and our companions were Magribis, men from North-Western Africa—the most quarrelsome and vicious of pilgrims.

We sailed on July 6th, and, as in an Irish packet of the olden time, the first preliminary to "shaking down" was a general fight. The rais (captain) naturally landed and left us to settle the matter, which ended in many a head being broken. I played my poor part in the *mêlée* by pushing down a heavy jar of water upon the swarm of assailants. At last the Magribis, failing to dislodge us from the poop, made peace, and finding we were sons of the Holy Cities, became as civil as their unkindly natures permitted. We spent twelve days, instead of the normal five, in beating down the five hundred and fifty direct miles between Suez and Yambu.

Every second day we managed to land and stretch our limbs. The mornings and evenings were mild and balmy, whilst the days were terrible. We felt as if a few more degrees of heat would be fatal to us. The celebrated coral reefs of the Red Sea, whence some

authors derive its name, appeared like meadows of brilliant flowers resembling those of earth, only far brighter and more beautiful. The sunsets were magnificent; the zodiacal light, or after-glow, was a study; and the cold rays of the moon, falling upon a wilderness of white clay and pinnacle, suggested a wintry day in England.

[See Page 18.

THE FIGHT ON THE SILK EL ZAHAB.

At last, after slowly working up a narrow creek leading to the Yambu harbour, on July 17th we sprang into a shore-boat, and felt new life when bidding eternal adieu and “sweet bad luck” to the Golden Thread, which seemed determined to wreck itself about once per diem.

Yambu, the port of El Medinah, lies S.S.W. of, and a little over a hundred and thirty miles from, its city. The road was infamous—rocky, often waterless, alternately fiery and freezing, and infested with the Beni Harb, a villainous tribe of hill Bedouins. Their chief was one Saad, a brigand of the first water. He was described as a little brown man, contemptible in appearance but remarkable for courage and for a ready wit, which saved him from the poison and pistol of his enemies. Some called him the friend of the poor, and all knew him to be the foe of the rich.

There was nothing to see at Yambu, where, however, we enjoyed the hammam and the drinking-water, which appeared deliciously sweet after the briny supplies of Suez. By dint of abundant bargaining we hired camels at the moderate rate of three dollars each—half in ready money, the rest to be paid after arrival. I also bought a shugduf, or rude litter carrying two, and I chose the boy Mohammed as my companion. The journey is usually done in five days. We took eight, and we considered ourselves lucky fellows.

On the evening of the next day (July 18th) we set out with all the gravity of men putting our heads into

the lion's jaws. The moon rose fair and clear as we emerged from the shadowy streets. When we launched into the desert, the sweet, crisp air delightfully contrasted with the close, offensive atmosphere of the town.

My companions all, as Arabs will do on such occasions, forgot to think of their precious boxes full of the plunder of Constantinople, and began to sing. We travelled till three o'clock in the morning (these people insist upon setting out in the afternoon and passing the night in travelling). And the Prophet informs us that the "calamities of earth," meaning scorpions, serpents, and wild beasts, are least dangerous during the dark hours.

After a pleasant sleep in the wilderness, we joined for the next day's march a caravan of grain carriers, about two hundred camels escorted by seven Turkish Bashi Buzuk, or Irregular Cavalry. They confirmed the report that the Bedouins were "out," and declared that Saad, the Old Man of the Mountain, had threatened to cut every throat venturing into his passes. That night the robbers gave us a mild taste of their quality, but soon ran away. The third march lay over an iron land and under a sky of brass to a long straggling village called, from its ruddy look, El Hamra (the Red); it is the middle station between Yambu and El Medinah. The fourth stage placed us on the Sultan's high-road leading from Meccah to the Prophet's burial-place, and we joined a company of pious persons bound on visitation.

The Bedouins, hearing that we had an escort of two hundred troopers, manned a gorge and would not let us advance till the armed men retired. The fifth and sixth days were forced halts at a vile place called Bir Abbas, where we could hear the distant dropping of the musketry, a sign that the troops and the hill-men were settling some little dispute. Again my companions were in cold perspirations about their treasures, and passed the most of their time in sulking and quarrelling.

About sunset on July 23rd, three or four caravans assembled at Bir Abbas, forming one large body for better defence against the dreaded Bedouins. We set out at 11 p.m., travelling without halting through the night, and at early dawn we found ourselves in an ill-famed narrow known as Shuab El Haji, or the Pilgrim's Pass. The boldest looked apprehensive as we approached it. Presently, from the precipitous cliff on our left, thin puffs of blue smoke rose in the sultry morning air, and afterwards the sharp cracks of the hill-men's matchlocks were echoed by the rocks on the right. A number of Bedouins could be seen swarming like hornets up the steeper slopes, carrying huge weapons and "spoiling for a fight." They took up comfortable positions on the cut-throat embankment and began practising upon us from behind their breastworks of piled stones with perfect convenience to themselves. We had nothing to do but to blaze away as much powder and to veil ourselves in as dense a smoke as possible. The result was that

we lost twelve men, besides camels and other beasts of burden. My companions seemed to consider this questionable affair a most gallant exploit.

The next night (July 24th) was severe. The path lay up rocky hill and down stony vale. A tripping and stumbling dromedary had been substituted for my better animal, and the consequences may be imagined.

The sun had nearly risen before I shook off the lethargic effects of such a march. All around me were hurrying their beasts, regardless of rough ground, and not a soul spoke a word to his neighbour. “Are there robbers in sight?” was the natural question. “No,” responded the boy Mohammed. “They are walking with their eyes; they will presently sight their homes.”

Half an hour afterwards we came to a huge mudarrij, or flight of steps, roughly cut in a line of black scoriaceous basalt. Arrived at the top, we passed through a lane of dark lava with steep banks on both sides, and in a few minutes a full view of the Holy City suddenly opened upon us. It was like a vision in “The Arabian Nights.” We halted our camels as if by word of command. All dismounted, in imitation of the pious of old, and sat down, jaded and hungry as we were, to feast our eyes on the “country of date-trees” which looked so passing fair after the “salt stony land.” As we looked eastward the sun rose out of the horizon of blue and pink hill, the frontier of Nejd staining the spacious plains with gold

and purple. The site of El Medinah is in the western edge of the highlands which form the plateau of Central Arabia. On the left side, or north, was a tall grim pile of porphyritic rock, the celebrated Mount Ohod, with a clump of verdure and a dome or two nestling at its base. Round a whitewashed fortalice founded upon a rock clustered a walled city, irregularly oval, with tall minarets enclosing a conspicuous green dome. To the west and south lay a large suburb and long lines of brilliant vegetation piercing the tawny levels. I now understood the full value of a phrase in the Moslem ritual—“And when the pilgrim’s eyes shall fall upon the trees of El Medinah, let him raise his voice and bless the Prophet with the choicest blessings.”

In all the panorama before us nothing was more striking, after the desolation through which we had passed, than the gardens and orchards about the town. My companions obeyed the command with the most poetical exclamations, bidding the Prophet “live for ever whilst the west wind bloweth gently over the hills of Nejd and the lightning flasheth bright in the firmament of El Hejaz.”

We then remounted and hurried through the Bab El Ambari, the gate of the western suburb. Crowded by relatives and friends, we passed down a broad, dusty street, pretty well supplied with ruins, into an open space called Barr El Manakhah, or “place where camels are made to kneel.” Straight forward a line leads directly into the Bab El Misri, the Egyptian gate