

aroused. Although the falling of an old house in the stilly night was not without precedent, still, in such cases, it was always best to inquire whether any one was hurt. The rescued ones were in no plight to stand any longer in the cold wind, so they went into the nearest friend's house, and there they told the group of faithful Moslems how Allah had sent his angel Gabriel to rescue them, by first carrying off the child, and then drawing the parents out by its cries. Early the next morning public worship was appointed in many of the mosques in Constantinople to celebrate and give thanks for such a miracle.

In due time, for one of the Turk's favourite mottoes is "Yarash, yarash," (slowly, slowly), Mustapha thought of his roll of gold safely locked up in the old green chest. With assistance he proceeded to remove the débris from that corner of the ruins corresponding to the position of the chest. Having removed the broken tiles and the heavier timbers, and thrusting his arm between some

boards to find the chest and drag it forth, he found it covered with blood. Further examination exposed the flattened and mangled remains of a man whose arm was caught under the lid of the chest, the fingers cold and stiff, still clutching the much-coveted roll of gold. Mustapha recognised the remains as those of a neighbour who had attended the feast, was loudest in his acclamations of joy, most attentive in witnessing the counting of the treasure, and who, undoubtedly, carried the child out, lest, awakening, its cries might arouse the parents. Though some still persisted in believing that it was the angel Gabriel who carried the child out, while the thief crept in through the open door, many of the devout were as ready to acknowledge Allah's mercies vouchsafed through the instrumentality of a man's evil designs.

In how many miracles now-a-days do we forget to examine carefully the débris, and for how many similar miracles have we all to be thankful.

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## AMONG THE KURDS.



**A**s this is the first occasion (says Mr. Tozer, in his "Turkish Armenia") on which we find ourselves among the Kurds, it may be well here to notice the most important facts relating to them. The evidence of their language shows that their race is of Median origin, and therefore belongs to the Indo-European family, for, notwithstanding that a considerable number of Arabic and Turkish words have found their way into the speech of the people, yet, both in grammar and vocabulary, it is closely allied to the Persian. Consequently, notwithstanding their national antagonism, the Kurds are also akin to the Armenians. They

are the same people who were called Carduchi in ancient times, and their name also appears to be that of Cordyene or Gordyene, which was applied to the district they inhabited. This corresponds approximately to the modern Kurdistan, being, roughly speaking, the country intersected by the upper waters of the Tigris, and its Eastern tributaries on the frontiers of Turkey and Persia. Here we find them at the time of the retreat of the Ten Thousand, between the dominions of the Great King and the plateaux of Armenia; but at a later period they spread into the last-named country, for we now find them there in great numbers, and, naturally, as the Armenians emigrate, they take their place.



Throughout their history they have been known for their wildness and independent character, and they were the most formidable of all the foes Xenophon had to encounter. From that time to the present day they have maintained themselves in their original seats, notwithstanding all the changes that have passed over Western Asia, and have been included within the various empires that have successively held sway there—Greek, Roman, Parthian, Byzantine, Saracen, Persian, and Turkish—though owing but a temporary and partial allegiance to any of them, and maintaining a semi-independence under their local chieftains. The most eminent historical character that has arisen from amongst them is the great Saladin, who is said by Abulfeda to have been a Kurd. Their number in Asiatic Turkey has been estimated by a careful authority at about 1,600,000 souls, but others think that they do not exceed a million.

The Kurd physiognomy as seen in these parts is striking and strongly marked. The shape of the face is a long oval, and the eyes are dark brown, those of the children being sometimes very beautiful; but the most characteristic feature is the nose, which is aquiline, and hooked downwards at the end, with large and strongly-lined nostrils, like those which we are accustomed to see on old Greek coins. The expression is seldom good. The men sometimes shave the hair in front, and leave it long behind, like the Albanians; the women generally have black, elf-like locks hanging down, which give them a Magæra-like appearance. They also have a partiality for full red trousers.

Bitlis is said to contain about 3,000 houses, of which 2,000 belong to the Kurds, 1,000 to the Armenians, 20 to the Turks, and 50 to the Syrians (Jacobites). Our host estimated these as representing 30,000 souls, a computation which allows a greater number of in-

habitants than usual to each house; but this would seem to be justified by the number of large, isolated buildings which it contains. The Kurdish girls here frequently wear the same nose-ring as I had seen worn by Armenian women at the convent of Changeli. The younger men of that race whom we saw in the bazaars were often very handsome, with black eyes and hair, regular features, and a determined look. These also were well dressed, wearing over their bright-coloured waistcoats short dark sheep-skin jackets, with the wool on, open in front without sleeves. Unlike the Kurds of the mountain districts, and those that inhabit the plain of Mush, they are not Kizilbashs or Shiites by religion, but Sunnites like the Turks. They were quite the wildest population that we had seen in any town, and we were not sorry to be accompanied by a *zaptieh* whilst sketching the castle.

We had now entered a land of upland pastures, and the Kurdish encampments began to be very numerous, so that in one view as many as fifty-seven black tents could be counted in separate groups. The Kurd conducted us to a camp, where on his recommendation another guide was provided to conduct us in his stead. After we had wasted half an hour he appeared in the shape of an old man, bearing a lance, and riding a mare which was accompanied by its foal. My companion, who had been among the Arabs, remarked that the Kurds whom we met like that people, always rode mares, and that these were unshod; and also, among other points of resemblance, that their lances were of bamboo, which would bend almost double.

Late in the afternoon we descended into a dip among the uplands, and here found the large encampment of which we were in search not far from the course of a clear mountain stream, with numerous tents, forming a long line, some large and black, some smaller,



round and white. The men who were hanging about them were a wild and surly-looking set, with hair streaming down in long locks. The dress of most of them was composed of white trousers, and a sort of frock-coat of a light material resembling cretonne, usually red in colour, with a belt and turban. All of course were armed. Their possessions might be seen about the encampment—sheep, goats, oxen and cows, herds of horses, big mastiff dogs and greyhounds clothed with small coats.

We had entered the encampment about the middle of the line; and while our tent was being pitched in the midst of the Kurdish tents—a process which greatly roused the curiosity of our new acquaintances—I was anxious to find some place in which to rest, for I had been suffering from face-ache during the day, and was very tired. So, seeing a nice-looking white tent close by, I asked whether I could betake myself thither. "*Yok! yok! yok!*" was the reply. "Oh, no! not on any account! That's the chief's—that's Mirza Aga's tent!" Well, I don't know whether leave was obtained, but in course of our journey we had learned to be no great respecters of persons; anyhow, in less than a minute my spurs were off, and I was reclining on Mirza Aga's carpet, with my head on his cushions, and was soon asleep. How long I remained there I do not know; but I was awakened at last by a light tap on my shoulder, and found a Kurd kneeling by my side with a small cup of Turkish coffee in his hand, of which I partook with much refreshment. It was, besides, a token of friendship. Coming as we did amongst this wild people, whom it is usually the traveller's object to avoid, we might have seemed to be running into the lion's jaws; but somehow things had gone so smoothly for us hitherto, and we had got so much into the habit of regarding ourselves as strange animals whom the natives did not like to molest, that it never came

into my mind to feel any apprehension; but if it had, the offer of this cup of coffee would have dispelled it, for one might feel certain that here, as amongst the Arabs, the bond of hospitality was a sacred one. The result proved that both our persons and our property were in perfect security. At sunset the muezzin uttered the usual call to prayers, in front of the chief's tent door, and thereupon many of the community engaged in worship in an independent style, each Kurd kneeling on his carpet near his own abode.

A first look at the Kurd tents gives a person the idea that they must be chilly habitations, but this disappears on a nearer inspection. There are, indeed, great spaces between the covering of the tent and the sides, and these latter are not pinned closely to the ground; but as they are occupied by day as well as by night this arrangement is necessary, for otherwise when the sun is on them the heat would be unbearable. But within the enclosure of the larger tents are separate rooms parted off, and both these and the sides of the tent itself are formed, not of any thin material, like canvas, but of a stout wicker-work of canes, each bar or cane of which is cased in worsted work of embroidery of gay colours, and in this way the whole is firmly compacted together. Within there is always a plentiful store of carpets, rugs, and pillows. In the larger encampment there are separate tents for the women.

The next morning Mirza provided us with an old white-bearded Kurd, armed as usual with a lance, and riding an unshod mare, to act as our guide.

After crossing a ridge nearly 9,000 feet in height, we were surprised at so great an elevation to find just below the crest another though smaller encampment. When we halted here for breakfast our old guide suddenly disappeared; he seemed to have vanished like a spirit, and we never saw him again.