

to be here related, about the place whence, according to their interpretation, the brilliant white jets ascend. It would be useless to explain to them that beneath the thin skull of rock which forms the surface of the Okesran peninsula, there lie extensive lakes of naphtha, fed perpetually by subterranean streams from the Caucasus, inflammable exhalations from which, having made their way to upper air, were set on fire by accident, and have never since been extinguished. In certain places, however, where the springs below are small and shallow, you may play with the dicty of the fire-worshippers with impunity. Of this the lime-burners are fully aware, and by way of amusing or surprising strangers, will pluck a few threads from their cotton garments, and putting them on the end of a long rake, and setting them on fire, will hold them over a chert in the rock through which they know by experience that invisible exhalations ascend. In an instant, the gases take fire, and shoot up to a great height in the atmosphere. The traveller, perhaps, imagines that these flames also, like those he beholds elsewhere in the peninsula, will continue burning, but ere his amazement at their sudden appearance has ceased, they collapse and vanish. As a rule, these vapors are inodorous; but there is one hill, torturingly at some distance from the village, which emits a stench so unendurable, that travellers are constrained to hold their noses as they pass, which suggests to the Mohammedans the substance of many an offensive joke against the divinity of the Parsees, who, according to them, is anything but a desirable neighbor.

What perplexes them most, however, is the immense number of monuments of remote antiquity existing on all sides, especially the figures of lions, accompanied by inscriptions in an unknown tongue. Though they themselves are dwellers in Oesera, it is past their comprehension that persons opulent enough to select their own places of abode, should ever have established themselves in their fiery peninsula, amid sand and fuller's-earth, and fountains of black and white naphtha, and stagnant pools of fetid and noisome, and the crackling of flames, and the whirling about of dust and ashes by impetuous winds from the mountains. In fact, it is by no means

one of the least curious phenomena of this place, that it should be frequently exposed to tempests so violent that it is matter of wonder they have not long ago swept all Baku into the sea. You stand perhaps on its battlements, enjoying the stillness of the air, and admiring the glassy surface of the Caspian, when suddenly a gust from the Caucasus fills your burnoose, tears off your turban, and lays your prone upon the earth, lashes up the waves into white foam, dashes the ships in the harbor against each other, and plunges up the sea in a straight line as far as the eye can reach. Then the clouds gather overhead, and lowering themselves gradually from the peaks of the mountains, canopy the whole peninsula, while the loudest thunder peals among the rocks, and lightning so vivid flashes from east to west, that the flames from the rocks are as little noticed as those of a few farthing tapers in the noonday sun. But the storms of Baku are of short continuance. Bursting unexpectedly, and raging with unexampled fury, they clear away and disappear in like manner. Something similar is observed at Nice, where the breeze from the Maritime Alps chills the whole atmosphere in a few minutes, and sends those home to put on their cloaks who came forth in the lightest attire to enjoy the sunshine, and the prospect of the calm sea. In spite of the changes of its climate, Baku, with all the surrounding country, was a favorite residence of the Medes, as well as of these fierce conquerors from Macedonia who subverted the Persian monarchy, and left so many traces of their rule over the whole of Asia, from the mouths of the Nile to the furthest waters of the Pambas. At Baku, the chief of Greece was busily at work, and had left upon the face of rocks, and the facade of ruined palaces, numerous mementoes of its playful character, figures of men engaged in various amusements and games of chance. To the believers in Allah, all those things are so many abominations. They hate images, they abhor art and its creations, which to their minds suggest no ideas save those of gross idolatry. They can conceive no reason for fabricating the figure of man or beast, unless with the design to worship it. Occasionally they account for the ruin of great cities in which statues are found, by observing that