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"MANY SHALL RUN TO AND FRO, AND KNOWLEDGE SHALL BE INCREASED."—DANIEL xii. 4.

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THE TRAVELLER.

THE NESTORIANS, OR THE LOST TRIBES.

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CHAP. II.

Practicability of visiting the Mountain Nestorians.—Journey to Constantinople.—Storm in the Mountains.—Journey to Mesopotamia, Diarbekir, and Mardin.—Providential Escape.

A BROTHER of the Nestorian patriarch, who visited us at Oroomiah, and a Koordish chief whom I had seen in his castle at Burdassoor, had expressed the opinion that my professional character would procure me a safe passport to any part of the Koordish Mountains, and, from what I had learned in my frequent intercourse with the Koords, I had reason to believe that I might safely pass through the Koordish territory, and enter the country of the Independent Nestorians.

My own impressions were, that I should be able to enter the country of the Independent Nestorians from the Persian frontier, and I advised this plan. But this was not assented to; and, in pursuance of the instructions of the Board to proceed by way of Mesopotamia, I set out from Ooroomiah on the first of April, 1839, for Erzeroom, where I had proposed to meet my expected associate, the Rev. Mr. Homes, of Constantinople, who was to be temporarily associated with me in this enterprise.

On my arrival at Salmas, I received a letter from him, apprising me that the brethren at Constantinople had decided against his entering upon the tour, under the apprehension that my late afflictions would put it out of my power to fulfil the plans of the Board in the formation of a permanent station. I looked upon this as another among the many indications of Providence which had come before us, in favour of my plan of entering the mountains from the Persian frontier. I wrote to our mission for advice, repeating my conviction of the importance of the measure I had before urged upon them, of entering the mountains before proceeding to Mesopotamia. The political state of the latter country was mentioned as one consideration in favour of this course. My letter was also accompanied by the assurance of the Governor of Salmas, that he would do everything to secure the success of the enterprise, and that he did not doubt but the facilities he could furnish would enable me to go and return in safety. But still there was not a majority in the mission in favour of my entering the mountains, and I was advised to proceed to join Mr. Homes, and enter upon the proposed tour in Mesopotamia.

I accordingly proceeded with as much expedition as possible to Constantinople. An unusual quantity of snow had fallen late in the season, and my journey proved one of extreme difficulty, and of no little peril. For more than two hundred miles I found the snow from two to three or four feet in depth, although it was the middle of April when I crossed this elevated portion of Armenia. On the great plain at the foot of Mount Ararat we encountered one of the most severe storms of snow I had ever experienced, and came near perishing in the mountains beyond, where the storm met us with increased fury. For more than twenty miles of this dreary road there was not a single human habitation. Our guide, about midway, became so much blinded by the snow that he could not keep the road, and I was obliged to take his place, and trust to the recollection of my former journey four years before, and the occasional traces of the path which was here and there swept bare by the driving wind. As we began to descend the mountains on the opposite side, where the wind had not done

us this important service, I was obliged to walk several miles, tracing the narrow path in the deep snow with my feet. I could only determine when I was out of the old beaten path, which lay beneath the new-fallen snow, by the depth to which I sunk in the frosty element. Our horses also became almost buried in the snow the moment they stepped out of the road.

While crossing the plain near the head-waters of the Euphrates, where Xenophon and the Ten Thousand suffered so much in their memorable retreat, my Nestorian attendant, and a pilgrim who had joined us, became nearly blind from the continued intense glare of the snow. This and a severe storm detained us two days at Moolah-Soolleiman, where we were most hospitably entertained in a stable, with forty or fifty head of horned cattle, horses, donkeys, and fowls, while the sheep occupied another apartment in the same house. In these and other particulars I found a striking coincidence with the experience of the brave Ten Thousand; and the dwellings and habits of the people were essentially the same as those described by Xenophon more than two thousand years ago. The houses were built mostly under ground, and the villages at a distance resembled a collection of large coal-pits, but broader, and not so high.

Our next stage was over the mountain-pass of Dahar, the most difficult between Constantinople and Persia. The recollection of what Messrs. Smith and Dwight experienced in their passage over this mountain, together with the fact that three natives had perished in the snow not long before, prepared me to expect a toilsome and difficult ride. But delay was not likely to make any improvement for many days to come; and, moreover, a storm of rain had set in on the plain, which would soon quite obstruct the road, as the horse would sink to his middle at every step. As we began to ascend the mountain, we found the rain changed to snow, and accompanied by a strong wind, which soon increased to a gale. When about two-thirds of the way up the mountain, the guide, who professed to be well acquainted with the road, led us into such deep snows, that our hardy horses were unable to proceed, and it became evident that we had wandered from the path. After much difficulty, we succeeded in finding it; but it was soon lost again, and the guide, after a fruitless search, declared it impossible to proceed. To turn back was nearly as hopeless, as the snow had filled our tracks almost as soon as they were made, and as the wind would then be in our faces. Under these circumstances, I felt that our hope was alone in God; but with his assurance that he would direct the path of those who acknowledged him in all their ways, I felt that he would order all for the best, though in what manner or to what end I could not foresee. Just then, as unexpected as if an angel had descended from heaven, four hardy mountaineers came tramping over the snow from the opposite side of the mountain. With much difficulty, we prevailed upon one of them to act as our guide; and by breaking down the high drifts of snow with our feet, and leading our horses where we could not ride, we at length succeeded in passing the mountains. There had been no horse across since the heavy storm a week before, and the old path could only be found in many places by striking a heavy cudgel deep in the snow; and our guide seldom mistook the road when he found his long staff strike on a hard foundation without sinking its length in the snow.

The next day we found ourselves in the valley of the Aras, where a warm sun, and heavy continued rains had swelled every rill to a fearful torrent; and we had as imminent danger in crossing the streams which lay in our way, as we had before experienced from mountain storms. In one

of these mountain torrents my horse was carried away, but finally succeeded in reaching the shore, when I had to ride several miles with my boots full of water as cold as the melting snow. On reaching the west branch of the Euphrates, I found the bridge had fallen in the night, and we only succeeded in crossing after the villagers had waded about in the cold water up to their waist for nearly an hour. At first they pronounced the ford impracticable, but finally succeeded in getting us across where the water came quite up on our saddles. Several other bridges were carried away, and in one instance I took a circuitous route, and crossed the stream in its separate branches near its source.

On arriving at Constantinople, I found that Mr. Homes could not then be spared from that station, and, with the concurrence of the brethren, I resolved to proceed alone into Mesopotamia, it being understood that I should remain in or near Diarbekir until Mr. Homes should join me. I accordingly made what haste I could to that field. From Trebizond, I rode in less than three days to Erzeroom, a distance by the winter route of at least 220 miles, and over a very mountainous road. On my route to Diarbekir, where I arrived on the 30th of May, I found great difficulty in crossing some of the lofty mountains, owing to the great quantity of snow which remained upon their summits at that late season, while immense avalanches had formed bridges of snow and ice over some of the foaming torrents which dashed through the narrow ravines. The bridge over the Euphrates at Paloo had been carried away, and I crossed the river on a raft of inflated skins, like those mentioned by Xenophon in his retreat of the Ten Thousand.

On my arrival at Diarbekir, I found the public mind in that state of suspense and expectation which could be compared to nothing but the calm which precedes an overwhelming storm; and soon it came, with terror and devastation in its course. The signal defeat, and almost entire dispersion of the Turkish army, was first publicly announced in that city by hundreds of soldiers fleeing from the battle-field, who had been stripped of their apparel, and all that they had, by the Koords, who had taken possession of the roads. From that time the reign of violence and anarchy commenced, and robberies and murders were the order of the day. Scarcely a man dared leave the walls of the city without a large party to accompany him. Each man robbed the man he met, and the arm of the strongest was the only law. The Governor, it is true, made an attempt to preserve the peace, and had the heads of five Koords, and about forty ears, hung up in the bazars, to deter others from committing violence upon the persons and property of the citizens. But these same hazards, two days after, were the theatre of most open and daring robberies. The defeat of the army having been ascribed by the mass of the people to the European uniform and tactics of the *Nezam*, great opposition was raised against it, and against all Europeans as the reputed cause of it. This spirit, under the influence of Moslem bigotry, and a jealousy lest, in the weak state of the country, Christianity would rise upon the ruins of Islam, was carried to such an extent, that we not only heard ourselves cursed in the streets as infidel dogs, but, as it is said, there was a determination expressed to kill all the Europeans in the place. What this threat might have resulted in, had we remained in the city, it is impossible to say; but I now learn that some Mussulmans came to our house after we left it, with evil intentions concerning us.

Having been joined by Mr. Homes, we proceeded to Mardin on the 10th of July, accompanied