

Our Foreign Letter.

TAIN UL ABADIN.

(The Tombs most renowned of the early Mohammedan Kings of Central Asia.)

IN 1889 the streets in this city had no names, so when anyone came and asked me to go to his house, I was always obliged to request him to stop and show me the way. At first I thought I should never find my way in and out of the city, so I made up my mind that I would spend a portion of every day going up the different ways into the city. My *syce* (groom) was a most patient man, fortunately for me. People used to ask him if I was mad, or what spirit was in me that I wandered daily from street to street, asking questions. I wearied even the *syce*; I do not think he quite knew that I understood more or less the questions which were put to him, or the answers he gave. His answer generally was, if he was a little tired and out of patience, *Khādī-chhu-Khabar suf* (God only knows). After a time I made several real friends of the tradesmen sitting on the side of the roads, or at their shop doors, selling their goods. There was one old Hindu especially, who used to sit at his door and write and read letters for any that needed such services. Few could read or write for themselves. He used also to make out bills and accounts

for all the small shopkeepers round. One day I asked him if he was called to some other part of the city, or to a village where he had never been before, how would he find his way to the people. He seemed surprised at my asking such a foolish question. I said, "Here is a city with 125,000 inhabitants; all the courts and alleys run into each other, without names or directions." "Well," he said, "if I am asked to go anywhere, I first ask the name of the person, then his father's name and trade and religion, then what mosque or shrine he lives near. Is it to the right-hand or left-hand side of the river, north, east, south, or west?" Then he very kindly gave me a lesson, pointing to different places. It was a most useful lesson to me, and that day a great difficulty was

removed. After that, when I passed, he often gave me a little examination. In a very few months I was able to find my way into the most unheard of places. Should anyone come for me and I was out, the servant could generally make me understand where I was wanted. I mention this, as it was well for me that I had taken pains and trouble to find my way about, or it might have cost me my life one night in 1891.

In the middle of January, 1891, I was called to a maternity case about 6 p.m. It was an hour's sharp riding to the house, through a cold wind and sleet. The case was not over till 12.45 a.m. I stayed until 3 a.m., so as to be sure that everything was all right; then I mounted my pony, and a man with a lantern was to see me home. I must tell you this man was a runner, who goes at the rate of seven miles an hour with ease. We had only just got out of the compound when I said to the man, "Are you ready?" He said, "Ready!" I gave my pony my usual little sound. Move he would not, so I just touched him with the whip, which I had never done before. The poor thing tried to move, but his legs went all ways, and down we came. The man moved to get to us, down he went, over went the lantern, and the glass broke. We tried to scramble up, and down we were again. The ground was like glass. After the sleet a sharp frost had set in. Well, after a time we seemed to get on through the bazaar, until we came to open ground again. I was leading the pony, when down I went. The man got a cut hand by falling against



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a stone. I said, "Wait, I will get ointment and a bandage out of the saddle-bag and bind your hand, and then you go and try and find shelter somewhere near for the night. I cannot keep my own feet now, let alone lead the pony, so I shall put the reins over the saddle and let him go; he may find his way home. So we parted, he praying that Mohammed and all the saints would take care of me. About 7 a.m. I arrived at home, and was glad to find the pony had arrived about an hour before me. They told me he neighed and stamped with his feet against the stable door; his groom woke up, and gave him a good feed and an extra lot of straw to lie on.

In a short time there was a good fire in my bedroom, and some hot soup that was ready for me the evening before. I felt too done up to take it, but my dear

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