

NOTE 7.—The indications of this alternative route to Kermán are very vague, but it may probably have been that through Finn, Tárum, and the Síjrán district, passing out of the plain of Hormuz by the eastern flank of the Ginao mountain. This road would pass near the hot springs at the base of the said mountain, Sarga, Khurkhu, and Ginao, which are described by Kämpfer. Being more or less sulphureous they are likely to be useful in skin-diseases: indeed, Hamilton speaks of their efficacy in these. (I. 95.) The salt-streams are numerous on this line, and dates are abundant. The bitterness of the bread was, however, more probably due to another cause, as Major Smith has kindly pointed out to me: "Throughout the mountains in the south of Persia, which are generally covered with dwarf oak, the people are in the habit of making bread of the acorns, or of the acorns mixed with wheat or barley. It is dark in colour, and very hard, bitter, and unpalatable."

Major St. John also noticed the bitterness of the bread in Kermán, but his servants attributed it to the presence in the wheat-fields of a bitter leguminous plant, with a yellowish white flower, which the Kermánis were too lazy to separate, so that much remained in the thrashing, and imparted its bitter flavour to the grain (surely the *Tare* of our Lord's Parable!).

[General Houtum-Schindler says (*l.c.* p. 496): "Marco Polo's return journey was, I am inclined to think, *viâ* Urzú and Báft, the shortest and most direct road. The road *viâ* Tárum and Síjrán is very seldom taken by travellers intending to go to Kermán; it is only frequented by the caravans going between Bender 'Abbás and Bahrámbád, three stages west of Kermán. Hot springs, 'curing itch,' I noticed at two places on the Urzú-Báft road. There were some near Qal'ah Asgher and others near Dashtáb; they were frequented by people suffering from skin-diseases, and were highly sulphureous; the water of those near Dashtáb turned a silver ring black after two hours' immersion. Another reason of my advocating the Urzú road is that the bitter bread spoken of by Marco Polo is only found on it, viz. at Báft and in Bardshír. In Síjrán, to the west, and on the roads to the east, the bread is sweet. The bitter taste is from the Khúr, a bitter leguminous plant, which grows among the wheat, and whose grains the people are too lazy to pick out. There is not a single oak between Bender 'Abbás and Kermán; none of the inhabitants seemed to know what an acorn was. A person at Báft, who had once gone to Kerbelá *viâ* Kermánsháh and Baghdad, recognised my sketch of tree and fruit immediately, having seen oak and acorn between Kermánsháh and Qasr-i-Shírín on the Baghdád road." Major Sykes writes (ch. xxiii.): "The above description undoubtedly refers to the main winter route, which runs *viâ* Síjrán. This is demonstrated by the fact that under the Kuh-i-Ginao, the summer station of Bandar Abbás, there is a magnificent sulphur spring, which, welling from an orifice 4 feet in diameter, forms a stream some 30 yards wide. Its temperature at the source is 113 degrees, and its therapeutic properties are highly appreciated. As to the bitterness of the bread, it is suggested in the notes that it was caused by being mixed with acorns, but, to-day at any rate, there are no oak forests in this part of Persia, and I would urge that it is better to accept our traveller's statement, that it was due to the bitterness of the water."—However, I prefer Gen. Houtum-Schindler's theory.—H. C.]