

north. Lingeh is more favourably situated for caravan transport towards Lār and Shīrāz, and is reputed to suffer less from excessive heat than Bandar Abbās. Hence it saw a considerable amount of trade in its port, including that derived from pearl fishing farther up the coast, until recent economic policy and other causes diverted most of this to Bahrein and Omān, leading to the rapid decay of the town. Many of the large houses to be seen in the broad streets of the town were deserted and crumbling into ruin. Here we were detained for four days, partly owing to severe malaria brought from Bandar Abbās by several members of my party and escort, and partly by the difficulty about transport resulting from the desertion of the owners of the camels which had been engaged at Bandar Abbās for the journey to Tāhirī.

The delay, however, could be utilized for the survey of a remarkable ruined fastness known as *Lēshtān*, which local opinion was inclined to identify with the *Dēzhgān* named in Firdausī's *Shābnāmab*.² It was reached at a distance of a little over 5 miles in a direct line to the north of the town, after passing across a desolate area of eroded ridges and terraces. These curiously recalled those I had seen filling the old terminal lake bed of the Su-lo-ho far away to the east of the Lop desert. Here the *mesas* consisted of high layers of clay overlain by crusts of calcareous sandstone; masses of this hard rock undercut by erosion had fallen and lined the foot of the terraces. The Qal'a-i-Lēshtān proved to be one of the largest of these *mesas*. As the photograph (Fig. 63) shows, it rises boldly above the surrounding flat ground to a height of some 200 feet. It presents on the south side vertical walls of clay, which the top stratum of hard cretaceous rock covers and overhangs in places. No artificial defences were needed to make the plateau above quite immune from attack on this side.

On the north the slopes are covered to a considerable extent with fallen masses of rock (Fig. 65) and might be scaled, though only with difficulty. Hence the portions of the plateau edge have here been crowned with walls. These appear to have been originally built throughout with rough slabs of stone quarried on the spot and set in hard mortar. But in places where the upper parts of these walls have fallen or the original defences have given way altogether, owing to the precipitous nature of the ground or from some other cause, repairs obviously of later date have been effected with large uncut stones, as seen in Fig. 65, no mortar being used. This photograph shows in its centre the only gate of the fastness. It is approached from a narrow ravine which separates the defended plateau from a long lower ridge to the north. The ascent leads along a steep and difficult path over blocks of sharp-edged rock debris. The entrance,

² A brief reference to this stronghold is found in Captain Stiffe's paper, *Geogr. Journal*, 1899, March, p. 295.