

TURKEY.

DAMASCUS.

*Memorandum by Consul Captain Burton, on the Bagdad Caravan,
January 20, 1870.*

On January 20, 1870, I went to the Shaghur Gate of Damascus, to see the arrival of the great caravan, which has just crossed the Desert under the first Shaykh Ibrahim El Nasr El Agayli and the Shaykh Sulayman El Arini El Agayli. The weather had been rainy and stormy for some days, and the country was a mass of mud, over which the camels travelled painfully. I met, on the way to the Shaghur Gate, strings of these animals, carrying in the newly-arrived merchandize, the jeleb, or untrained beasts that traverse the Desert, being too wild and terrified to be admitted within the walls.

The camels are of two kinds—

1. Khawar, which General Chesney erroneously writes "khowas," strong and heavy, slow and coarse-haired animals. They are sold here, as they cannot support the heat of Bagdad. They are, in fact, like cart horses, compared with hunters.

2. Júdí, thorough-bred and fine-haired beasts, whose blood and light limbs enable them to support the fatigue and the heat of the return journey. Of these, about 3,820 were half loaded, equivalent to 2,700 full loads, and a total of 4,000 beasts composed the caravan.

From the Shaykh Sulayman, who entertained me with coffee and ajwa (date paste) in a tent without side walls, I learned that the journey, which can be effected by a single dromedary in ten days, had occupied him 55 (the usual time), and that the abnormal droughts had caused much suffering to man and beast. The escort consisted of 300 to 400 men, armed with the coarsest flints and matchlocks; they are, however, a match for any force of "ghazu" (outcast banditti) that can be brought against them at this season, when the tribes have moved either north or south of the line of march. The whole body is expected to reach Damascus on January 24. This encampment is only the first detachment. The caravan will stay here till business becomes slack, and this period may vary from a fortnight to six weeks. If sufficient prices be offered for them, the camels will be sold; if not, they will return to Bagdad. Not more than 200 of them will march back loaded, and their freight will be composed chiefly of broadcloth (jokh), domestic (khami), and Damascus silks.

The following are the details supplied to me by Khwajah Smouha, one of the richest Hebrew merchants connected with Bagdad and Damascus:—

Value of Loads.	Number of Loads.	
Napoleons. 50,000	2,500	Each animal carrying 6 bags of timbak, or Persian tobacco; each load worth 20 Napoleons. The loads are large and are packed in black and white haircloth.
15,000	300	Of abas, or Arab cloaks, each containing 100 abas, and each aba worth half a Napoleon.
4,000	10	Of kufiyahs (shawls worn on the head); each load containing 200, and the price not yet settled.
10,000	250	Of busut and zawali (different kinds of rugs); usually packed in small bales.
4,800	700	Of dates in different preparation; also packed in small loads.
1,500	50	Of perfumes and similar luxuries.
2,000	10	Of harir (raw silk), kazz (poor silk), and other kinds required by local industry.
28,000	..	The estimated value of 4,000 camels, each at 7 Napoleons.
114,800	3,820	

Damascus, February 1, 1870.