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Flushing (Holland) to Calcutta Overland**

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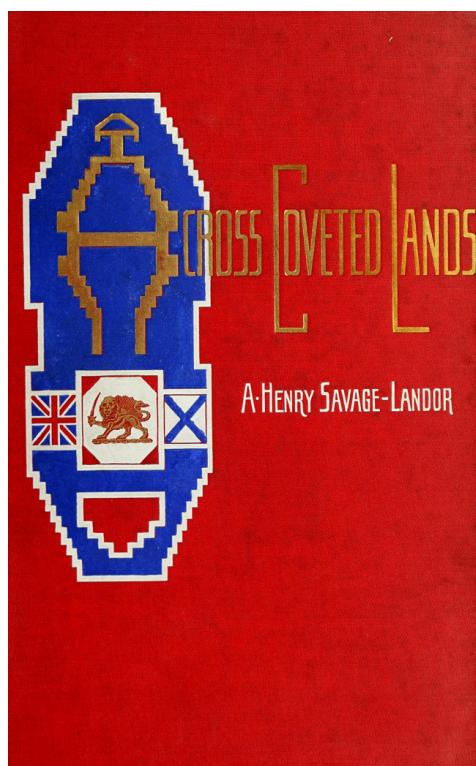
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ACROSS COVETED LANDS

OR

A JOURNEY FROM FLUSHING (HOLLAND) TO
CALCUTTA, OVERLAND

BY

A. HENRY SAVAGE LANDOR

WITH 175 ILLUSTRATIONS, DIAGRAMS, PLANS AND MAPS

BY AUTHOR

IN TWO VOLUMES

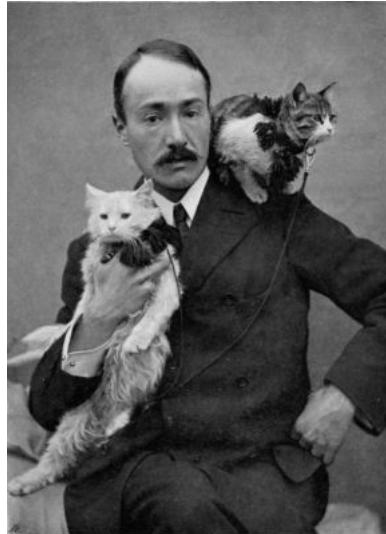
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KERMAN AND ZERIS, the two Kittens who accompanied Author on his wanderings.

"A whole day was spent in preparing for the journey, and when November 4th came, shortly before midnight my provisions were packed upon my camels, with an extra load of fowls and one of fruit, while on the hump of the last camel of my caravan were perched, in a wooden box made comfortable with straw and cotton-wool, two pretty Persian kittens, aged respectively three weeks and four weeks, which I had purchased in Kerman, and which, as we shall see, lived through a great many adventures and sufferings, and actually reached London safe and sound, proving themselves to be the most wonderful and agreeable little travelling companions imaginable. One was christened "Kerman," the other "Zeris."

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Transcriber's Notes

1. Obvious punctuation and printing errors repaired.
2. Format of: "(altitude," "per cent.," "A.M.," "P.M.," "A.D.," "B.C." and "s.s." have been standardised.

The remaining corrections made are indicated by dotted lines under the corrections. Scroll the mouse over the word and the original text will appear.

ACROSS COVETED LANDS

OR

**A JOURNEY FROM FLUSHING (HOLLAND) TO
CALCUTTA, OVERLAND**

BY

A. HENRY SAVAGE LANDOR

WITH 175 ILLUSTRATIONS, DIAGRAMS, PLANS AND MAPS

BY AUTHOR

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I

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HIS MAJESTY THE SHAH OF PERSIA.

RICHARD CLAY AND SONS, LIMITED,

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ACROSS COVETED LANDS

CHAPTER I

The start—The terrors of the Russian Custom-house—An amusing incident at the Russian frontier—Politeness of Russian officials—Warsaw: its sights; its lovely women—The talented Pole—People who know how to travel by train—A ludicrous scene.

"FIRST single to Baku," I requested when my turn came at the window of the ticket office at Victoria Station.

"Baku?—where is that?" queried the ticket man.

"In Southern Russia."

"Oh, I see! Well, we cannot book further than Warsaw for Russia."

"Warsaw will do. . . . How much? . . . Thank you."

My baggage having next been duly registered direct for the capital of Poland, off I set to Queenborough, crossed over by the night boat to Flushing, and continued the following morning by express to Berlin.

Once in the Russian train from the German capital one hears a great deal of the terrors of the approaching Russian Custom-house, and here I may relate rather an amusing incident which will prove what these terrors amount to. In my sleeping car there happened to be some French merchants on their way to the fair of Nijni-Novgorod. On perceiving my two rifles, a good-sized ammunition case, and two cameras, one of the gentlemen gratuitously informed me that if I intended to proceed to Russia I had better leave all these things behind, or they would all be confiscated at the frontier. I begged to differ, and the Frenchmen laughed boisterously at my ignorance, and at what would happen presently. In their imaginative minds they perceived my valued firearms being lost for ever, and predicted my being detained at the police station till it pleased *les terribles Cossacques* to let me proceed.

"Evidently," shouted one of the Frenchmen at the top of his voice, "this is your first journey abroad. . . . We," he added, "are great travellers. We have been once before in Russia."

"You *are* great travellers!" I exclaimed, with the emphasis very strong on the *are*, and pretending intense admiration.

Naturally the Franco-Russian Alliance was dragged into the conversation; were I a Frenchman I might fare less badly. The Russians and the French were brothers. But a British subject! A hated Englishman bringing into Russia two rifles, two revolvers, six hundred cartridges, twelve hundred photographic plates, two cameras, a large case of scientific instruments, all of which I would duly declare! Why? Russia was not England. I should soon experience how Englishmen were treated in some countries. "Russians," he exclaimed, "have not a polished manner like the French. *Ah, non!* They are semi-barbarians yet. They respect and fear the French, but not the English. . . . *par exemple!*"

The frontier station of Alexandrovo was reached, and a horde of terror-stricken passengers alighted from the carriages, preceded and followed by bags, portmanteaux, hold-alls, and bundles of umbrellas, which were hastily conveyed to the long tables of the huge Custom-house inspection room.

The two Frenchmen had their belongings next to mine on the long counter, and presently an officer came. They were French subjects and they had nothing to declare. Their elaborately decorated bags were instantly ordered open and turned upside down, while the officer searched with some gusto among the contents now spread on the table. There was a small pocket camera, two packets of photographic plates, some soiled handkerchiefs, collars and cuffs, a box of fancy note-paper, a bottle of scent, a pair of embroidered pantoufles, and a lot of patent brass studs and cuff links.

With the exception of the soiled linen, everything was seized, for all were liable to duty, and some sharp words of reprimand were used by the officer to my now subdued French neighbours for attempting to smuggle.

The officer moved on to me.

"Monsieur," mournfully remarked the Frenchman, "now *you* will be done for."

I declared everything and produced a special permit, which had been very courteously given me by the Russian Ambassador, and handed it to the officer. Having eagerly read it, he stood with his heels together and gave me a military salute. With a profound bow he begged me to point out to him all my luggage so that he could have it stamped without giving me further trouble. He politely declined to use the keys I handed him, and thinking that I might feel uncomfortable in the hustling crowd of people he conveyed me to a chair in order that I might sit down.

I turned round to look at the Frenchmen. They had altogether collapsed.

"I thought you said that Englishmen were hated in Russia, and that they would confiscate all my things? You see they have confiscated nothing," I meekly remarked to the Frenchmen, when they returned to the sleeping car. "I do not think that I have met with more polite Customs officials anywhere."

"*Oui, oui,*" muttered the stouter Frenchman, who was evidently in no mood to enter into further conversation. "*Et nous autres bêtes,*" he soliloquized, "*qui avons fait l'alliance avec ces sauvages là! On m'a tout pris même le papier à lettres!*"

He removed his coat and waistcoat and the many interesting patent appliances for holding his tie in the correct position—where it never remained—then he threw himself violently on the berth, face towards the wall, and grumbled the greater part of the night on the stupid mistake of the Franco-Russian Alliance. On his return to France he would write a letter to the Ministre des Affaires Étrangères. After a long and tedious soliloquy he fortunately fell asleep.

Warsaw on the Vistula, the old capital of Poland, was reached in the morning.

The quickest way to Baku would have been to proceed to Moscow and then by the so-called "petroleum express," which leaves once a week, every Tuesday, for Baku. Unluckily, I could not reach Moscow in time, and therefore decided to travel across Russia by the next best route, *via* Kiev, Rostoff, and the Caspian. The few hours I remained in Warsaw were pleasantly spent in going about seeing the usual sights; the Palace and lovely Lazienki gardens, laid out in the old bed of the Vistula; the out-of-door theatre on a small island, the auditorium being separated by water from the stage; the lakes, the Saska Ogród, and the Krasinski public gardens; the Jewish quarter of the town; the museums of ancient and modern art.

There are few cities in Europe that are prettier, cleaner, and more animated than Warsaw, and few women in the world that have a better claim to good looks than the Warsaw fair sex. The majority of women one sees in the streets are handsome, and carry themselves well, and their dress is in good taste, never over-done as it is in Paris, for instance.

The whole city has a flourishing appearance, with its tramways, gay omnibuses, electric light, telephones, and every modern convenience. The streets are broad and cheerful. In the newer parts of the city there are beautiful residences, several of which, I was told, belong to British subjects settled there. The Russian military element is very strong, for Poland's love for Russia is not yet very great. As we walk along the main thoroughfares a long string of Cossacks, in their long black felt cloaks and Astrakan caps, canter along. They are a remarkably picturesque and business-like lot of soldiers.

Poles are civility itself, that is, of course, if one is civil to them.

Historically the place is of extreme interest, and the battlefields of Novogeorgievsk, which played such an important part in the Polish insurrection of 1831, and of Grochowo, where the Poles were defeated, are well worth a visit. At Maciejowice, too, some fifty miles up the Vistula, Kosciuzko was made prisoner by the conquering Russians.

Warsaw is the third largest city in the Russian Empire, and its favourable geographical position makes it one of the great pivots of Eastern Europe. With a navigable river and the great main railway lines to important centres such as Berlin, Vienna, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Dantzig, Kiev, and Odessa, with good climatic conditions, and fertile soil; with the pick of natural talent in art and science, and the love for enterprise that is innate in the Polish character, Warsaw cannot help being a prosperous place.

The city has very extensive suburbs. The best known to foreigners, Praga, on the opposite bank of the Vistula, is connected with Warsaw by two iron bridges. Warsaw itself is built on terraces, one above another, along the bank of the river, but the main portion of the city stands on a high undulating plain above. There are over a hundred Catholic, several Greek churches, and a number of synagogues; a university, schools of art, academies, fourteen monasteries, and two nunneries.

There are few places in the world where the artisan or the common workman is more intelligent and artistic, and where the upper classes are more refined and soundly cultured, than in Warsaw. With a certain reflex of the neighbouring German commercial influence, the place has become a thriving manufacturing and trading centre. Machinery, excellent pianos and other musical instruments, carriages, silver and electro-plate, boots and leather goods are manufactured and exported on a large scale. The tanneries of Warsaw are renowned the world over, and the Warsaw boots are much sought after all over the Russian Empire for their softness, lightness and durability. Then there are great exports of wheat, flax, sugar, beer, spirits, and tobacco.

But time is short, and we must drive to the station. Say what you will about the Russian, there is a thing that he certainly knows how to do. He knows how to travel by rail. One has a great many

preconceived ideas of the Russian and his ways. One is always reminded that he is a barbarian, that he is ignorant, that he is dirty. He is possibly a barbarian in one way, that he can differentiate good from bad, real comfort from "optical illusions" or illusions of any other kind, a thing highly civilised people seem generally unable to do. This is particularly noticeable in Russian railway travelling,—probably the best and cheapest in the world.

To begin with, when you take a first-class ticket it entitles you to a seat numbered and reserved that nobody can appropriate. No more tickets are sold than correspond with the accommodation provided in the train. This does away entirely with the "leaving one's umbrella" business, to secure a seat, or scattering one's belongings all over the carriage to ensure the whole compartment to one's self, to the inconvenience of other travellers. Then first, second and third-class passengers are provided with sleeping accommodation. The sleeping accommodation, especially for first and second-class passengers, consists of a wide and long berth wherein they can turn round at their will, if they please, not of a short, narrow bunk in which even a lean person has to lie edgewise or roll out, as in the continental sleeping car, for which discomfort (rather than accommodation) preposterous extra charges have to be paid, above the first-class fare. Then, too, in the latter the compartments are so small, so ridiculously ventilated, that after one night spent boxed in, especially if another passenger shares the same cabin, one feels sick for some hours, and in the day-time one has no room to turn round, nor space to put one's legs. As for the lighting, the less said the better. These faults exist in our own and the continental first-class compartments.

But the barbarian Russian knows and does better. The line being of a very broad gauge, his first-class carriages are extremely spacious and very high, with large windows and efficacious ventilators; and there is plenty of room everywhere to spread one's limbs in every direction. There is probably less gilding about the ceiling, fewer nickel-plated catches about the doors; not so much polished wood, nor ghastly coloured imitation-leather paper, nor looking-glasses, but very convenient folding-tables are found instead; the seats are ample and serviceable, of plain, handsome red velvet, devoid of the innumerable dust-collecting button-pits—that striking feature of British and continental railway-carriage decoration. Movable cushions are provided for one's back and head. There are bright electric lights burning overhead, and adjustable reading lights in the corners of the carriage. A corridor runs along the whole train, and for a few kopeks passengers can at any moment procure excellent tea, caviare sandwiches, or other light refreshments from attendants.

Now for the bedding itself. The Russian, who is ever a practical man, carries his own bedding—a couple of sheets, blankets, and small pillow,—a custom infinitely cleaner and more sensible than sleeping in dubious, smelly blankets of which one does not know who has used them before, nor when they were washed last. But if passengers wish, by paying a rouble (two shillings) a night to the guard, bedding is provided by the Railway. There is a fine *lavabo* at the end of each carriage, with shampoo, hot and cold water, etc. Here, too, by asking the guard, towels are handed over to those passengers who have not brought their own.

Here I may relate another amusing incident. Unable to get at my towels packed in my registered baggage, and ignorant of the Russian language, I inquired of a polyglot fellow-passenger what was the Russian word for towel, so that I could ask the guard for one.

"*Palatiensi*," said he, and I repeated, "*Palatiensi, palatiensi, palatiensi*," so as to impress the word well upon my memory. Having enjoyed a good wash and a shampoo, and dripping all over with water, I rang for the guard, and sure enough, when the man came, I could not recollect the word. At last it dawned upon me that it was,—"*Palatinski*," and "*Palatinski*," I asked of the guard.

To my surprise the guard smiled graciously, and putting on a modest air replied: "*Palatinski niet, paruski* (I do not speak Latin, I speak only Russian)," and the more I repeated "*palatinski*," putting the inflection now on one syllable, then on the other, to make him understand, the more flattered the man seemed to be, and modestly gave the same answer.

This was incomprehensible to me, until my polyglot fellow-passenger came to my assistance.

"Do you know what you are asking the guard?" he said in convulsions of laughter.

"Yes, I am asking for a '*palatinski*'—a towel."

"No, you are not!" and he positively went into hysterics. "*Palatinski* means 'Do you speak Latin?'" How can you expect a Russian railway-guard to speak Latin? Look how incensed the poor man is at being mistaken for a Latin scholar! Ask him for a *palatiensi*, and he will run for a towel."

The man did run on the magic word being pronounced, and duly returned with a nice clean *palatiensi*, which, however, was little use to me for I had by this time nearly got dry by the natural processes of dripping and evaporation.

One or two other similar incidents, and the extreme civility one meets from every one while travelling in Russia, passed the time away pleasantly until Kiev, one of the oldest cities of Russia, was reached.

CHAPTER II

Kiev—Its protecting Saint—Intellectuality and trade—Priests and education—Wherein lies the strength of Russia—Industries—A famous Monastery—The Catacombs of St. Theodosius and St. Anthony—Pilgrims—Veneration of Saints—The Dnieper river—Churches—A luminous cross—Kharkoff—Agriculture—Horse fairs—Rostoff—Votka drunkenness—Strong fortifications—Cheap and good travelling—Baku.

TRADITION tells us that Kiev was founded before the Christian era, and its vicissitudes have since been many and varied. It has at all times been considered one of the most important ecclesiastical centres of Russia,—if not indeed the most important—but particularly since St. Vladimir, the protecting saint of the city, preached Christianity there in 988, this being the first time that the religion of Christ had been expounded in Russia. A century and a half before that time (in 822) Kiev was the capital city of the state and remained such till 1169. In 1240 it was captured by Mongols

who held it for 81 years. The Lithuanians came next, and remained in possession for 249 years, until 1569; then Poland possessed it until the year 1654, when it became part of the Russian Empire.

Kiev has the name of being a very intellectual city. Somehow or other, intellectuality and trade do not seem to go together, and although the place boasts of a military school and arsenal, theological colleges, a university, a school of sacred picture painters, and a great many scientific and learned societies, we find that none of these are locally put to any marked practical use, except the sacred-picture painting; the images being disposed of very rapidly, and for comparatively high prices all over the country. Hardly any religious resorts are great commercial centres, the people of these places being generally conservative and bigoted and the ruling priestly classes devoting too much attention to idealism to embark in commercial enterprise, which leaves little time for praying. Agriculture and horticulture are encouraged and give good results.

The priests make money—plenty of it—by their religion, and they probably know that there is nothing more disastrous to religion in laymen than rapid money-making by trade or otherwise. With money comes education, and with education, too powerful a light thrown upon superstition and idolatry. It is nevertheless possible, even probable, that in the ignorance of the masses, in the fervent and unshaken confidence which they possess in God, the Czar and their leaders, may yet lie the greatest strength of Russia. It must not be forgotten that half-educated, or half uneducated, masses are probably the weakness to-day of most other civilised nations.

Some business on a small scale, however, is transacted at the various fairs held in Kiev, such as the great fair at the beginning of the Russian year. There are many beet-root sugar refineries, the staple industry of the country, and next come leather tanneries, worked leather, machinery, spirits, grain and tobacco. Wax candles are manufactured in huge quantities, and in the monastery there is a very ancient printing-press for religious books.

Peter the Great erected a fortress here in a most commanding spot. It is said to contain up-to-date guns. A special pass has to be obtained from the military authorities to be allowed to enter it, not so much because it is used as an arsenal, but because from the high tower a most excellent panoramic view is obtained of the city, the neighbourhood, and the course of the river down below.

But Kiev is famous above all for its monastery, the Kievo-Petcherskaya, near which the two catacombs of St. Theodosius and St. Antony attract over three hundred thousand pilgrims every year. The first catacomb contains forty-five bodies of saints, the other eighty and the revered remains are stored in plain wood or silver-mounted coffins, duly labelled with adequate inscriptions. The huge monastery itself bears the appearance of great wealth, and has special accommodation for pilgrims. As many as 200,000 pilgrims are said to receive board and lodging yearly in the monastery. These are naturally pilgrims of the lower classes.

Enormous riches in solid gold, silver and jewellery are stored in the monastery and are daily increased by devout gifts.

But let us visit the catacombs.

The spare-looking, long-haired and bearded priests at the entrance of the catacomb present to each pilgrim, as a memento, a useful and much valued wax candle, which one lights and carries in one's hand down the steep and slippery steps of the subterranean passages. All along, the procession halts before mummified and most unattractive bodies, a buzzing of prayers being raised by the pilgrims when the identity of each saint is explained by the priest conducting the party. The more devout people stoop over the bodies and kiss them fervently all over, voluntarily and gladly disbursing in return for the privilege all such small cash as may lie idle in their pockets.

Down and down the crowd goes through the long winding, cold, damp, rancid-smelling passages, devoid of the remotest gleam of ventilation, and where one breathes air so thick and foul that it sticks to one's clothes and furs one's tongue, throat and lungs for several hours after one has emerged from the catacombs into fresh air again. Yet there are hermit monks who spend their lives underground without ever coming up to the light, and in doing so become bony, discoloured, ghastly creatures, with staring, inspired eyes and hollow cheeks, half demented to all appearance, but much revered and respected by the crowds for their self-sacrifice.

Further on the pilgrims drink holy water out of a small cup made in the shape of a cross, with which the liquid is served out from a larger vessel. The expression of beatitude on their faces as they sip of the holy water, and their amazing reverence for all they see and are told to do, are quite extraordinary to watch, and are quite refreshing in these dying days of idealism supplanted by fast-growing and less poetic atheistic notions. The scowl I received from the priest when my turn came and he lifted the tin cross to my lips, is still well impressed upon my mind. I drew back and politely declined to drink. There was a murmur of strong disapproval from all the people present, and the priest grumbled something; but really, what with the fetid smell of tallow-candle smoke, the used-up air, and the high scent of pilgrims—and religious people ever have a pungent odour peculiar to themselves—water, whether holy or otherwise, was about the very beverage that would have finished me up at that particular moment.

Glad I was to be out in the open air again, driving through the pretty gardens of Kiev, and to enjoy the extensive view from the high cliffs overlooking the winding Dnieper River. A handsome suspension bridge joins the two banks. The river is navigable and during the spring floods the water has been known to rise as much as twenty feet.

The city of Kiev is situated on high undulating ground some 350 feet above the river, and up to 1837 consisted of the old town, Podol and Petchersk, to which forty-two years later were added Shulyavka, Solomenka, Kurenevka and Lukyanovka, the city being divided into eight districts. The more modern part of the town is very handsome, with wide streets and fine stone houses of good architecture, whereas the poorer abodes are mostly constructed of wood.

As in all the other cities of Russia there are in Kiev a great many churches, over seventy in all, the oldest of which is the Cathedral of St. Sophia in the centre of the town, built as early as 1037 on the spot where the Pechenegs were defeated the previous year by Yarosloff. It is renowned for its superb altar, its valuable mosaics and the tombs of Russian grand-dukes. Next in importance is the Church of the Assumption, containing the bodies of seven saints conveyed here from Constantinople. At night the cross borne by the statue of Vladimir, erected on a high point

overlooking the Dnieper, is lighted up by electricity. This luminous cross can be seen for miles and miles all over the country, and the effect is most impressive and weird.

From Kiev I had to strike across country, and the trains were naturally not quite so luxurious as the express trains on the main line, but still the carriages were of the same type, extremely comfortable and spacious, and all the trains corridor trains.

The next important city where I halted for a few hours was Kharkoff in the Ukraine, an agricultural centre where beet-root was raised in huge quantities and sugar manufactured from it; wheat was plentiful, and good cattle, sheep and horses were bred. The population was mostly of Cossacks of the Don and Little Russians. The industries of the place were closely akin to farming. Agricultural implements were manufactured; there were wool-cleaning yards, soap and candle factories, wheat-mills, brandy distilleries, leather tanneries, cloth manufactories, and brick kilns.

The horse fairs at Kharkoff are patronised by buyers from all parts of Russia, but to outsiders the city is probably better known as the early cradle of Nihilistic notions. Although quite a handsome city, with fine streets and remarkably good shops, Kharkoff has nothing special to attract the casual visitor, and in ordinary times a few hours are more than sufficient to get a fair idea of the place.

With a railway ticket punched so often that there is very little left of it, we proceed to Rostoff, where we shall strike the main line from Moscow to the Caucasus. Here is a comparatively new city—not unlike the shambling lesser Western cities of the United States of America, with plenty of tumbling-down, made-anyhow fences, and empty tin cans lying everywhere. The streets are unpaved, and the consequent dust blinding, the drinking saloons in undue proportion to the number of houses, and votka-drunk people in undue proportion to the population. Votka-drunkenness differs from the intoxication of other liquors in one particular. Instead of "dead drunk" it leaves the individuals drunk-dead. You see a disgusting number of these corpse-like folks lying about the streets, cadaverous-looking and motionless, spread flat on their faces or backs, uncared-for by everybody. Some sleep it off, and, if not run over by a droshki, eventually go home; some sleep it on, and are eventually conveyed to the graveyard, and nobody seems any the wiser except, of course, the people who do not drink bad votka to excess.

Rostoff stands at the head of the Delta of the Don, a position of great strategical importance, where of course the Russians have not failed to build strong fortifications. These were begun as early as 1761. Now very active ship-building yards are found here, and extensive caviare factories. Leather, wool, corn, soap, ropes and tobacco are also exported, and the place, apart from its military importance, is steadily growing commercially. The majority of shops seem to deal chiefly in American and German made agricultural implements, machinery and tools, and in firearms and knives of all sizes and shapes. The place is not particularly clean and certainly hot, dusty and most unattractive. One is glad to get into the train again and steam away from it.

As we get further South towards the Caucasus the country grows more barren and hot, the dust is appalling, but the types of inhabitants at the little stations become very picturesque. The Georgians are very fine people and the Armenians too, in appearance at least. The station sheds along the dusty steppes are guarded by soldiers, presumably to prevent attacks on the trains, and as one gets near the Caspian one begins to see the wooden pyramids over oil wells, and long freight trains of petroleum carried in iron cylindrical tanks. The wells get more numerous as we go along; the stations more crowded with petroleum tanks. We are nearing the great naphtha wells of Baku, where at last we arrive, having travelled from Tuesday to Sunday afternoon, or five days, except a few hours' halt in Kiev, Kharkoff and Rostoff.



THE BAKU OIL WELLS.

The first-class railway fare from Warsaw for the whole journey was fully covered by a five-pound note, and, mind you, could have been done cheaper if one chose to travel by slower trains on a less direct route!

CHAPTER III

Baku—Unnecessary anxiety—A storm—Oil wells—Naphtha spouts—How the wells are worked—The native city—The Baku Bay—Fortifications—The Maiden's Tower—Depressing vegetation—Baku dust—Prosperity and hospitality—The Amir of Bokhara—The mail service to Persia on the Caspian—The Mercury and Caucasus line—Lenkoran—Astara (Russo-Persian boundary)—Antiquated steamers.

So many accounts are heard of how one's registered baggage in Russia generally arrives with locks smashed and minus one's most valuable property, and how unpunctual in arriving luggage is, and how few passengers escape without having their pockets picked before reaching their destination—by the way, a fellow-passenger had his pockets picked at the station of Mineralnaya Vod—that I was somewhat anxious to see my belongings again, and fully expected to find that something had gone wrong with them. Much to my surprise, on producing the receipt at the very handsome railway terminus, all my portmanteaux and cases were instantly delivered in excellent condition.

The Caspian Sea steamers for Persia leave Baku on Sunday and Tuesday at midnight. There was a fierce sand storm raging at the time and the steamer had returned without being able to land her passengers at their destination. I decided to wait till the Tuesday. There is plenty to interest one in Baku. I will not describe the eternal fires, described so often by other visitors, nor tell how naphtha was tapped for the first time at this place, and how in 1886 one particular well spouted oil with such tremendous force that it was impossible to check it and it deluged a good portion of the neighbourhood. A year later, in 1887, another fountain rose to a height of 350 ft. There are myriads of other lesser fountains and wells, each covered by a wooden shed like a slender pyramid, and it is a common occurrence to see a big spout of naphtha rising outside and high above the top of the wooden shed, now from one well, now from another.

The process of bringing naphtha to the surface under ordinary circumstances is simple and effective, a metal cylinder is employed that has a valve at the lower end allowing the tube to fill while it descends, and closing automatically when the tube is full and is being raised above ground and emptied into pits provided for the purpose. The naphtha then undergoes the process of refinement. There are at the present moment hundreds of refineries in Baku. The residue and waste of naphtha are used as fuel, being very much cheaper than coal or wood.

The greater number of wells are found a few miles out of the town on the Balakhani Peninsula, and the naphtha is carried into the Baku refineries by numerous pipe lines. The whole country round is, however, impregnated with oil, and even the sea in one or two bays near Baku is coated with inflammable stuff and can be ignited by throwing a lighted match upon it. At night this has a weird effect.

Apart from the oil, Baku—especially the European settlement—has nothing to fascinate the traveller. In the native city, Persian in type, with flat roofs one above the other and the hill top crowned by a castle and the Mosque of Shah Abbas, constant murders occur. The native population consists mostly of Armenians and Persians. Cotton, saffron, opium, silk and salt are exported in comparatively small quantities. Machinery, grain and dried fruit constitute the chief imports.

The crescent-shaped Baku Bay, protected as it is by a small island in front of it, affords a safe anchorage for shipping. It has good ship-yards and is the principal station of the Russian fleet in the Caspian. Since Baku became part of the Russian Empire in 1806 the harbour has been very strongly fortified.

The most striking architectural sight in Baku is the round Maiden's Tower by the water edge, from the top of which the lovely daughter of the Khan of Baku precipitated herself on to the rocks below because she could not marry the man she loved.

The most depressing sight in Baku is the vegetation, or rather the strenuous efforts of the lover of plants to procure verdure at all costs in the gardens. It is seldom one's lot to see trees and plants look more pitiable, notwithstanding the unbounded care that is taken of them. The terrific heat of Baku, the hot winds and sand-storms are deadly enemies to vegetation. Nothing will grow. One does not see a blade of grass nor a shrub anywhere except those few that are artificially brought up. The sand is most trying. It is so fine that the wind forces it through anything, and one's tables, one's chairs, one's bed are yellow-coated with it. The tablecloth at the hotel, specklessly white when you begin to dine, gets gradually yellower at sight, and by the time you are half through your dinner the waiter has to come with a brush to remove the thick coating of dust on the table.

These are the drawbacks, but there is an air of prosperity about the place and people that is distinctly pleasing, even although one may not share in it. There is quite a fair foreign community of business people, and their activity is very praiseworthy. The people are very hospitable—too hospitable. When they do not talk of naphtha, they drink sweet champagne in unlimited quantities. But what else could they do? Everything is naphtha here, everything smells of naphtha, the steamers, the railway engines are run with naphtha. The streets are greasy with naphtha. Occasionally—frequently of late—the monotony of the place is broken by fires of gigantic proportions on the premises of over-insured well-owners. The destruction to property on such occasions is immense, the fires spreading with incalculable rapidity over an enormous area, and the difficulty of extinguishing them being considerable.

When I was in Baku the Amir of Bokhara was being entertained in the city as guest of the Government. His suite was quartered in the Grand Hotel. He had taken his usual tour through Russia and no trouble had been spared to impress the Amir with the greatness of the Russian Empire. He had been given a very good time, and I was much impressed with the pomp and cordiality with which he was treated. Neither the Governor nor any of the other officials showed him the usual stand-off manner which in India, for instance, would have been used towards an Asiatic potentate, whether conquered by us or otherwise. They dealt with him as if he had been a European prince—at which the Amir seemed much flattered. He had a striking, good-natured face with black beard and moustache, and dark tired eyes that clearly testified to Russian hospitality.

I went to see him off on the steamer which he kept waiting several hours after the advertised time of departure. He dolefully strode on board over a grand display of oriental rugs, while the military brass band provided for the occasion played Russian selections. Everybody official wore decorations, even the captain of the merchant ship, who proudly bore upon his chest a brilliant star—a Bokhara distinction received from the Amir on his outward journey for navigating him safely across the Caspian.



THE AMIR OF BOKHARA LEAVING BAKU TO RETURN TO HIS COUNTRY.

The Amir's suite was very picturesque, some of the men wearing long crimson velvet gowns embroidered in gold, others silk-checked garments. All had white turbans. The snapshot reproduced in the illustration shows the Amir accompanied by the Governor of Baku just stepping on board.

There is a regular mail service twice a week in summer, from April to the end of October, and once a week in winter, on the Caspian between Baku and Enzeli in Persia, the Russian Government paying a subsidy to the Kavkaz and Mercury Steam Navigation Company for the purpose of conveying passengers, mails (and, in the event of war, troops) into Persia and back. There are also a number of coasting steamers constantly plying between the various ports on the Caspian both on the Russian and Persian coast.

The hurricane having abated there was a prospect of a fair voyage and the probability of landing at Enzeli in Persia, so when the Tuesday came I went on board the old rickety paddle-steamer (no less than forty-five years old) which was to convey me to that port. She was one of the Mercury-Caucasus Co. fleet, and very dirty she was, too.

It is perhaps right to mention that for the first time in Russia, purposeless rudeness and insolence came to my notice on the part of the ticket officials of the Mercury line. They behaved like stupid children, and were absolutely incompetent to do the work which had been entrusted to them. They were somewhat surprised when I took them to task and made them "sit up." Having found that they had played the fool with the wrong man they instantly became very meek and obliging. It is nevertheless a great pity that the Mercury Company should employ men of this kind who, for some aim of their own, annoy passengers, both foreign and Russian, and are a disgrace to the Company and their country.

On board ship the captain, officers and stewards were extremely civil. Nearly all the captains of the Caspian steamers were Norwegian or from Finland, and were jolly fellows. The cabins were very much inhabited, so much so that it was difficult to sleep in them at all. Insects so voracious and in such quantities and variety were in full possession of the berths, that they gave one as lively a night as it is possible for mortals to have. Fortunately the journey was not a long one, and having duly departed at midnight from Baku I reached Lenkoran the next day, with its picturesque background of mountains and thickly-wooded country. This spot is renowned for tiger-shooting.

Our next halt was at Astara, where there were a number of wooden sheds and drinking saloons,—a dreadful place, important only because on the Perso-Russian boundary line formed by the river of the same name. We landed here a number of police officers, who were met by a deputation of some fifty Persian-looking men, who threw their arms round their necks and in turn lustily kissed them on both cheeks. It was a funny sight. When we got on board again after a couple of hours on shore the wind rose and we tossed about considerably. Another sleepless night on the "living" mattress in the bunk, and early in the morning we reached the Persian port of Enzeli.

CHAPTER IV

The Port of Enzeli—Troublesome landing—Flat-bottomed boats—A special permit
—Civility of officials—Across the Murd-ap lagoon—Piri-Bazaar—A self-imposed golden rule—Where our stock came from—The drive to Resht—The bazaar—The native shops and foreign goods—Ghilan's trade—The increase in trade—British and Russian competitions—Sugar—Tobacco—Hotels—The British Consulate—The Governor's palace—H.E. Salare Afkham—A Swiss hotel—Banks.

ONE calls Enzeli a "port" *pour façon de parler*, for Persia has no harbours at all on the Caspian sea. Enzeli, Meshed-i-Sher or Astrabad, the three principal landing places on the Persian coast, have no shelter for ships, which have to lie a good distance out at sea while passengers and cargo are transhipped by the Company's steam launch or—in rough weather—by rowing boats. In very rough weather it is impossible to effect a landing at all, and—this is a most frequent occurrence on the treacherous Caspian—after reaching one's journey's end one has to go all the way back to the starting point and begin afresh. There are people who have been compelled to take the journey four or five times before they could land, until the violent storms which often rage along the Persian coast had completely subsided and allowed the flimsy steam-launch at Enzeli to come out to meet the steamers, lying about a mile outside.

We had passengers on board who had been unable to land on the previous journey, and were now on their second attempt to set foot in Persia. We were rolling a good deal when we cast anchor, and after waiting some hours we were informed that it was too rough for the steam-launch to come out. The captain feared that he must put to sea again, as the wind was rising and he was afraid to remain so near the coast. Two rowing boats eventually came out, and with some considerable exertion of the rowers succeeded in getting near the steamer. I immediately chartered one, and after a good deal of see-saw and banging and knocking and crackling of wood alongside the steamer, my baggage and I

were transhipped into the flat-bottomed boat. Off we rowed towards the shore, getting drenched each time that the boat dipped her nose into the sea.

The narrow entrance of the Enzeli bay is blocked by a sand-bar. The water is here very shallow, only about six feet deep. Riding on the top of the breakers was quite an experience, and we occasionally shipped a good deal of water. We, however, landed safely and had to pay pretty dearly for the convenience. The boatmen do not run the risk of going out for nothing, and when they do, take every advantage of passengers who employ them. I was fortunate to get off by giving a backshish of a few *tomans* (dollars), but there are people who have been known to pay three, four and even five pounds sterling to be conveyed on shore.

Here, too, thanks to the civility of the Persian Ambassador in London, I had a special permit for my firearms, instruments, etc., and met with the greatest courtesy from the Belgian and Persian officers in the Customs. It is necessary to have one's passport in order, duly *visé* by the Persian Consul in London, or else a delay might occur at Enzeli.

There is a lighthouse at Enzeli, the Customs buildings and a small hotel. From this point a lagoon, the Murd-ap has to be crossed, either by the small steam-launch or by rowing boat. As there seemed to be some uncertainty about the departure of the launch, and as I had a good deal of luggage, I preferred the latter way. Eight powerful men rowed with all their might at the prospect of a good backshish; and we sped along at a good pace on the placid waters of the lagoon, in big stretches of open water, now skirting small islands, occasionally through narrow canals, the banks of which were covered with high reeds and heavy, tropical, confused, untidy vegetation. The air was still and stifling—absolutely unmoved, screened as it was on all sides by vegetation. The sailors sang a monotonous cadence, and the boat glided along for some three hours until we arrived at the mouth of the Piri river, hardly wide enough for a couple of boats to go through simultaneously, and so shallow that rowing was no longer practicable.

The men jumped off, tied the towing rope that hung from the mast to their belts, and ran along the banks of the Piri river, the water of which was almost stagnant. An hour or so later we suddenly came upon a number of boats jammed together in the miniature harbour of Piri Bazaar—a pool of putrid water a few feet in circumference. As the boat gradually approached, a stone-paved path still separated from you by a thick wide layer of filthy mud wound its way to the few miserable sheds—the bazaar—up above. A few trays of grapes, some Persian bread, some earthenware pottery of the cheapest kind, are displayed in the shop fronts—and that is all of the Piri-Bazaar. On landing at Enzeli one hears so much of Piri-Bazaar that one gets to imagine it a big, important place,—and as it is, moreover, practically the first really typical Persian place at which one touches, the expectations are high. Upon arrival there one's heart sinks into one's boots, and one's boots sink deep into black stinking mud as one takes a very long—yet much too short—jump from the boat on to what one presumes to be *terra firma*.

With boots clogged and heavy with filth, a hundred people like ravenous birds of prey yelling in your ears (and picking your pockets if they have a chance), with your luggage being mercilessly dragged in the mud, with everybody demanding backshish on all sides, tapping you on the shoulder or pulling your coat,—thus one lands in real Persia.

In the country of Iran one does not travel for pleasure nor is there any pleasure in travelling. For study and interest, yes. There is plenty of both everywhere.

Personally, I invariably make up my mind when I start for the East that no matter what happens I will on no account get out of temper, and this self-imposed rule—I must admit—was never, in all my travels, tried to the tantalising extent that it was in the country of the Shah. The Persian lower classes—particularly in places where they have come in contact with Europeans—are well-nigh intolerable. There is nothing that they will not do to annoy you in every possible way, to extort backshish from you. In only one way do Persians in this respect differ from other Orientals. The others usually try to obtain money by pleasing you and being useful and polite, whereas the Persian adopts the quicker, if not safer, method of bothering you and giving you trouble to such an unlimited degree that you are compelled to give something in order to get rid of him. And in a country where no redress can be obtained from the police, where laws do not count, and where the lower classes are as corrupt and unscrupulous as they are in the more civilised parts of Persia (these remarks do not apply to the parts where few or no Europeans have been) the only way to save one's self from constant worry and repressed anger—so bad for one's health—is to make up one's mind at once to what extent one is prepared to be imposed upon, and leave the country after. That is to say, if one does not wish to adopt the only other and more attractive alternative of inflicting summary justice on two-thirds of the natives one meets,—too great an exertion, to be sure, in so hot a climate.

They say that Persia is the country that our stock came from. It is quite possible, and if so we are indeed to be congratulated upon having morally improved so much since, or the Persians to be condoled with on their sad degeneration. The better classes, however, are very different, as we shall see later.

Personally, I adopted the first method suggested above, the easier of the two, and I deliberately put by what I thought was a fair sum to be devoted exclusively to extortion. On leaving the country several months later, much to my astonishment I found that I had not been imposed upon half as much as I expected, although I had stayed in Persia double the time I had intended. Maybe this can be accounted for by my having spent most of my time in parts not so much frequented by Europeans. Indeed, if the Persian is to-day the perfidious individual he is, we have to a great extent only ourselves to blame for making him so.

Keeping my temper under control, and an eye on my belongings, I next hired a carriage to convey me to the town of Resht, seven miles distant. In damp heat, that made one's clothes moist and unpleasant, upon a road muddy to such an extent that the wheels sank several inches in it and splashed the passenger all over, we galloped through thick vegetation and patches of agriculture, and entered the city of Resht. Through the narrow winding streets of the bazaar we slowed down somewhat in some places, the carriage almost touching the walls of the street on both sides. The better houses possess verandahs with banisters painted blue, while the walls of the buildings are generally white.

One is struck by the great number of shoe shops in the bazaar, displaying true Persian shoes with pointed turned-up toes,—then by the brass and copper vessel shops, the ancient and extremely graceful shapes of the vessels and amphoras being to this date faithfully preserved and reproduced.

More pleasing still to the eye are the fruit shops, with huge trays of water-melons, cucumbers, figs, and heaps of grapes. The latter are, nevertheless, not so very tasty to the palate and do not compare with the delicate flavour of the Italian or Spanish grapes.

Somewhat incongruous and out-of-place, yet more numerous than truly Persian shops, are the semi-European stores, with cheap glass windows displaying inside highly dangerous-looking kerosene lamps, badly put together tin goods, soiled enamel tumblers and plates, silvered glass balls for ceiling decoration, and the vilest oleographs that the human mind can devise, only matched by the vileness of the frames. Small looking-glasses play an important part in these displays, and occasionally a hand sewing-machine. Tinned provisions, wine and liquor shops are numerous, but unfortunate is the man who may have to depend upon them for his food. The goods are the remnants of the oldest stocks that have gradually drifted, unsold, down to Baku, and have eventually been shipped over for the Persian market where people do not know any better. Resht is the chief city in the Ghilan province.

Ghilan's trade in piece-goods is about two-thirds in the hands of Russia, while one-third (or even less) is still retained by England,—Manchester goods. This cannot well be helped, for there is no direct route from Great Britain to Resht, and all British goods must come through Bagdad, Tabriz, or Baku. The two first routes carry most of the trade, which consists principally of shirtings, prints, cambrics, mulls, nainsooks, and Turkey-reds, which are usually put down as of Turkish origin, whereas in reality they come from Manchester, and are merely re-exported, mainly from Constantinople, by native firms either in direct traffic or in exchange for goods received.

One has heard a great deal of the enormous increase in trade in Persia during the last couple of years or so. The increase has not been in the trade itself, but in the collection of Customs dues, which is now done in a regular and business like fashion by competent Belgian officials, instead of by natives, to whom the various collecting stations were formerly farmed out.

It will not be very easy for the British trader to compete successfully with the Russian in northern Persia, for that country, being geographically in such close proximity, can transport her cheaply made goods at a very low cost into Iran. Also the Russian Government allows enormous advantages to her own traders with Persia in order to secure the Persian market, and to develop her fast-increasing industrial progress,—advantages which British traders do not enjoy. Still, considering all the difficulties British trade has to contend with in order to penetrate, particularly into Ghilan, it is extraordinary how some articles, like white Manchester shirtings, enjoy practically a monopoly, being of a better quality than similar goods sent by Russia, Austria, Hungary, Germany, Italy or Holland.

Loaf sugar, which came at one time almost entirely from France, has been cut out by Russian sugar, which is imported in large quantities and eventually finds its way all over Persia. It is of inferior quality, but very much cheaper than sugar of French manufacture, and is the chief Russian import into Ghilan.

Tobacco comes principally from Turkey and Russia. In going on with our drive through the bazaar we see it sold in the tiny tobacco shops, where it is tastily arranged in heaps on square pieces of blue paper, by the side of Russian and Turkish cigarettes.



PERSIAN WRESTLING.

And now for the Resht Hotels. Here is an Armenian hotel—European style. From the balcony signs and gesticulations and shouts in English, French, and Russian endeavour to attract the passer-by—a youth even rushes to the horses and stops them in order to induce the traveller to alight and put up at the hostelry; but after a long discussion, on we go, and slowly wind our way through the intricate streets crowded with men and women and children—all grumbling and making some remark as one goes by. At one point a circle of people squatting in the middle of a road round a pile of water-melons, at huge slices of which they each bit lustily, kept us waiting some time, till they moved themselves and their melons out of the way for the carriage to pass. Further on a soldier or two in rags lay sleeping flat on the shady side of the road, with his pipe (kalian) and his sword lying by his side. Boys were riding wildly on donkeys and frightened women scrambled away or flattened themselves against the side walls of the street, while the hubs of the wheels shaved and greased their ample black silk or cotton trousers made in the shape of sacks, and the horses' hoofs splashed them all over with mud. The women's faces were covered with a white cloth reaching down to the waist. Here, too, as in China, the double basket arrangement on a long pole swung across the shoulders was much used for conveying loads of fruit and vegetables on men's shoulders;—but least picturesque of all were the well-to-do people of the strong sex, in short frock-coats pleated all over in the skirt.

One gets a glimpse of a picturesque blue-tiled pagoda-like roof with a cylindrical column upon it, and at last we emerge into a large quadrangular square, with European buildings to the west side.

A little further the British flag flies gaily in the wind above H.M.'s Consulate. Then we come upon a larger building, the Palace of the Governor, who, to save himself the trouble and expense of having sentries at the entrances, had life-size representations of soldiers with drawn swords painted on the wall. They are not all represented wearing the same uniform, as one would expect with a guard of that kind, but for variety's sake some have red coats, with plenty of gold braiding on them, and blue trousers, the others blue coats and red trousers. One could not honestly call the building a beautiful

one, but in its unrestored condition it is quite picturesque and quaint. It possesses a spacious verandah painted bright blue, and two windows at each side with elaborate ornamentals similarly coloured red and blue. A red-bordered white flag with the national lion in the centre floats over the Palace, and an elaborate castellated archway, with a repetition of the Persian Lion on either side, stands in front of the main entrance in the square of the Palace. So also do four useful kerosene lamp-posts. The telegraph office is to the right of the Palace with a pretty garden in front of it.

The most important political personage living in Resht is His Excellency Salare Afkham, called Mirza Fathollah Khan, one of the richest men in Persia, who has a yearly income of some twenty thousand pounds sterling. He owns a huge house and a great deal of land round Resht, and is much respected for his talent and kindly manner. He was formerly Minister of the Customs and Posts of all Persia, and his chest is a blaze of Russian, Turkish and Persian decorations of the highest class, bestowed upon him by the various Sovereigns in recognition of his good work. He has for private secretary Abal Kassem Khan, the son of the best known of modern Persian poets, Chams-echoéra, and himself a very able man who has travelled all over Asia, Turkestan and Europe.

Persia is a country of disappointments. There is a general belief that the Swiss are splendid hotel-keepers. Let me give you my experience of the hotel at Resht kept by a Swiss.

"Can this be the Swiss hotel?" I queried to myself, as the driver pulled up in front of an appallingly dirty flight of steps. There seemed to be no one about, and after going through the greater part of the building, I eventually came across a semi-starved Persian servant, who assured me that it was. The proprietor, when found, received me with an air of condescension that was entertaining. He led me to a room which he said was the best in the house. On inspection, the others, I agreed with him, were decidedly not better. The hotel had twelve bedrooms and they were all disgustingly filthy. True enough, each bedroom had more beds in it than one really needed, two or even three in each bedroom, but a *coup-d'œil* was sufficient to assure one's self that it was out of the question to make use of any of them. I counted four different coloured hairs, of disproportionate lengths and texture, on one bed-pillow in my room, leaving little doubt that no less than four people had laid their heads on that pillow before; and the pillow of the other bed was so black with dirt that I should imagine at least a dozen consecutive occupants of that couch would be a low estimate indeed. As for the sheets, blankets, and towels, we had better draw a veil. I therefore preferred to spread my own bedding on the floor, and slept there. The hotel boasted of three large dining-rooms in which a few moth-eaten stuffed birds and a case or two of mutilated butterflies, a couple of German oleographs, which set one's teeth on edge, and dusty, stamped cotton hangings formed the entire decoration.

To give one an appetite—which one never lost as long as one stayed there—one was informed before dinner that the proprietor was formerly the Shah's cook. After dinner one felt very, very sorry for the poor Shah, and more so for one's self, for having put up at the hotel. But there was no other place in Resht, and I stuck to my decision that I would never get angry, so I stood all patiently. The next day I would start for Teheran.

One talks of Persian extortion, but it is nothing to the example offered to the natives by Europeans in Persia. The charges at the hotel were exorbitant. One paid as much per day as one would at the very first hotel in London, New York, or Paris, such as the Carlton, the Waldorf, or Ritz. Only here one got absolutely nothing for it except very likely an infectious disease, as I did. In walking bare-footed on the filthy matting, while taking my bath, some invisible germ bored its way into the sole of my right foot and caused me a good deal of trouble for several weeks after. Animal life in all its varieties was plentiful in all the rooms.

Previous to starting on the long drive to the capital I had to get some meat cooked for use on the road, but it was so putrid that even when I flung it to a famished pariah dog he refused to eat it. And all this, mind you, was inexcusable, because excellent meat, chickens, eggs, vegetables, and fruit, can be purchased in Resht for a mere song, the average price of a good chicken, for instance, being about 5d. to 10d., a whole sheep costing some eight or ten shillings. I think it is only right that this man should be exposed, so as to put other travellers on their guard, not so much for his overcharges, for when travelling one does not mind over-paying if one is properly treated, but for his impudence in furnishing provisions that even a dog would not eat. Had it not been that I had other provisions with me I should have fared very badly on the long drive to Teheran.

It may interest future travellers to know that the building where the hotel was at the time of my visit, August, 1901, has now been taken over for five years by the Russian Bank in order to open a branch of their business in Resht, and that the hotel itself, I believe, has now shifted to even less palatial quarters!

The Imperial Bank of Persia has for some years had a branch in Resht, and until 1901 was the only banking establishment in the town.

CHAPTER V

Resht—Impostors—A visit to the Head Mullah—Quaint notions—Arrangements for the drive to Teheran—The Russian concession of the Teheran road—The stormy Caspian and unsafe harbours—The great Menzil bridge—A detour in the road—Capital employed in the construction of the road—Mistaken English notions of Russia—Theory and practice—High tolls—Exorbitant fares—A speculator's offer refused—Development of the road.

RESHT is an odious place in every way. It is, as it were, the "Port Said" of Persia, for here the scum of Armenia, of Southern Russia, and of Turkestan, stagnates, unable to proceed on the long and expensive journey to Teheran. One cannot go out for a walk without being accosted by any number of impostors, often in European clothes, who cling like leeches and proceed to try to interest you in more or less plausible swindles. One meets a great many people, too, who are on the look out for a "lift" in one's carriage to the Persian capital.

I paid quite an interesting visit to a near relation of the Shah's, who was the guest of the local Head Mullah. The approach to the Mullah's palace was not attractive. I was conveyed through narrow passages, much out of repair, until we arrived in front of a staircase at the foot of which lay in a row,

and in pairs, shoes of all sizes, prices, and ages, patiently waiting for their respective owners inside the house. A great many people were outside in the courtyard, some squatting down and smoking a kalian, which was passed round after a puff or two from one person to the other, care being taken by the last smoker to wipe the mouthpiece with the palm of his hand before handing it to his neighbour. Others loitered about and conversed in a low tone of voice.

A Mullah received me at the bottom of the staircase and led me up stairs to a large European-looking room, with glass windows, cane chairs, and Austrian glass candelabras. There were a number of Mullahs in their long black robes, white or green sashes, and large turbans, sitting round the room in a semicircle, and in the centre sat the high Mullah with the young prince by his side. They all rose when I entered, and I was greeted in a dignified yet very friendly manner. A chair was given me next to the high Mullah, and the usual questions about one's family, the vicissitudes of one's journey, one's age, one's plans, the accounts of what one had seen in other countries, were duly gone through.

It was rather curious to notice the interest displayed by the high Mullah in our South African war. He seemed anxious to know whether it was over yet, or when it would be over. Also, how was it that a big nation like Great Britain could not conquer a small nation like the Boers.

"It is easier for an elephant to kill another elephant," I replied, "than for him to squash a mosquito."

"Do you not think," said the Mullah, "that England is now an old nation, tired and worn—too old to fight? Nations are like individuals. They can fight in youth—they must rest in old age. She has lived in glory and luxury too long. Glory and luxury make nations weak. Persia is an example."

"Yes, there is much truth in your sayings. We are tired and worn. We have been and are still fast asleep in consequence. But maybe the day will come when we shall wake up much refreshed. We are old enough to learn, but not to die yet."

He was sorry that England was in trouble.

Tea, or rather sugar with some drops of tea on it was passed, in tiny little glasses with miniature perforated tin spoons. Then another cross-examination.

"Do you drink spirits and wine?"

"No."

"Do you smoke?"

"No."

"You would make a good Mussulman."

"Possibly, but not probably."

"In your travels do you find the people generally good or bad?"

"Taking things all round, in their badness, I find the people usually pretty good."

"How much does your King give you to go about seeing foreign countries?"

"The King gives me nothing. I go at my own expense."

This statement seemed to take their breath away. It was bad enough for a man to be sent—for a consideration—by his own Government to a strange land, but to pay for the journey one's self, why! it seemed to them too preposterous for words. They had quite an excited discussion about it among themselves, the Persian idea being that every man must sponge upon the Government to the utmost extent.

The young Prince hoped that I would travel as his guest in his carriage to Teheran. Unfortunately, however, I had made other arrangements, and was unable to accept his invitation.

My visit ended with renewed salaams and good wishes on their part for my welfare on the long journey I was about to undertake. I noticed that, with the exception of the Prince, who shook my hand warmly, the Mullahs bowed over and over again, but did not touch my hand.

Now for the business visit at the post station. After a good deal of talk and an unlimited consumption of tea, it had been arranged that a landau with four post horses to be changed every six farsakhs, at each post station, and a *fourgon*—a large van without springs, also with four horses,—for luggage, should convey me to Teheran. So little luggage is allowed inside one's carriage that an additional *fourgon* is nearly always required. One is told that large packages can be forwarded at a small cost by the postal service, and that they will reach Teheran soon after the passengers, but unhappy is the person that tries the rash experiment. There is nothing to guarantee him that he will ever see his luggage again. In Persia, a golden rule while travelling, that may involve some loss of time but will avoid endless trouble and worry in the end, is never to let one's luggage go out of sight. One is told that the new Teheran road is a Russian enterprise, and therefore quite reliable, and so it is, but not so the company of transportation, which is in the hands of natives, the firm of Messrs. Bagheroff Brothers, which is merely subsidized by the Russian Road Company.

As every one knows, in 1893 the Russians obtained a concession to construct a carriage-road from Piri-Bazaar *via* Resht to Kasvin, an extension to Hamadan, and the purchase of the road from Kasvin to Teheran, which was already in existence. Nominally the concession was not granted to the Russian Government itself—as is generally believed in England—but to a private company—the "Compagnie d'Assurance et de Transport en Perse," which, nevertheless, is a mere off-shoot of Government enterprise and is backed by the Russian Government to no mean degree. The Company's headquarters are in Moscow, and in Persia the chief office is at Kasvin.

Here it may be well to add that if this important concession slipped out of our hands we have only ourselves to blame. We can in no way accuse the Russians of taking advantage of us, but can only admire them for knowing how to take advantage of a good opportunity. We had the opportunity first; it was offered us in the first instance by Persia which needed a loan of a paltry sixty million francs, or a little over two million pounds sterling. The concession was offered as a guarantee for the loan, but we, as usual, temporised and thought it over and argued—especially the people who did not know what they were arguing about—and eventually absolutely refused to have anything to do with

the scheme. The Russians had the next offer and jumped at it, as was natural in people well versed in Persian affairs, and well able to foresee the enormous possibilities of such an undertaking.

It was, beyond doubt, from the very beginning—except to people absolutely ignorant and mentally blind—that the concession, apart from its political importance, was a most excellent financial investment. Not only would the road be most useful for the transit of Russian goods to the capital of Persia, and from there all over the country, but for military purposes it would prove invaluable. Maybe its use in the latter capacity will be shown sooner than we in England think.

Of course, to complete the scheme the landing at Enzeli must still be improved, so that small ships may enter in safety and land passengers and goods each journey without the unpleasant alternative, which we have seen, of having to return to one's point of departure and begin again, two, or three, or even four times. One gentleman I met in Persia told me that on one occasion the journey from Baku to Enzeli—thirty-six hours—occupied him the space of twenty-six days!



FOURGONS ON THE RUSSIAN ROAD BETWEEN RESHT AND TEHERAN.

The Caspian is stormy the greater part of the year, the water shallow, no protection from the wind exists on any side, and wrecks, considering the small amount of navigation on that sea, are extremely frequent. As we have seen, there are not more than six feet of water on the bar at Enzeli, but with a jetty which could be built at no very considerable expense (as it probably will be some day) and a dredger kept constantly at work, Enzeli could become quite a possible harbour, and the dangers of long delays and the present risks that await passengers and goods, if not absolutely avoided, would at least be minimised to an almost insignificant degree. The navigation of the lagoon and stream presents no difficulty, and the Russians have already obtained the right to widen the mouth of the Murd-ap at Enzeli, in conjunction with the concession of the Piri-Bazaar-Teheran road.

The road was very easy to make, being mostly over flat country and rising to no great elevation, 5,000 feet being the highest point. It follows the old caravan track nearly all the way, the only important detour made by the new road being between Paichinar and Kasvin, to avoid the high Kharzan or Kiajan pass—7,500 feet—over which the old track went.

Considering the nature of the country it crosses, the new road is a good one and is well kept. Three large bridges and fifty-eight small ones have been spanned across streams and ravines, the longest being the bridge at Menzil, 142 yards long.

From Resht, *via* Deschambe Bazaar, to Kudum the road strikes due south across country. From Kudum (altitude, 292 feet) to Rudbar (665 feet) the road is practically along the old track on the north-west bank of the Kizil Uzen River, which, from its source flows first in a south-easterly direction, and then turns at Menzil almost at a right angle towards the north-east, changing its name into Sefid Rud (the White River). Some miles after passing Rudbar, the river has to be crossed by the great bridge, to reach Menzil, which lies on the opposite side of the stream.

From Menzil to Kasvin the Russian engineers had slightly more trouble in constructing the road. A good deal of blasting had to be done to make the road sufficiently broad for wheeled traffic; then came the important detour, as we have seen, from Paichinar to Kasvin, so that practically the portion of the road from Menzil to Kasvin is a new road altogether, *via* Mala Ali and Kuhim, the old track being met again at the village of Agha Baba.

The width of the road averages twenty-one feet. In difficult places, such as along ravines, or where the road had to be cut into the rock, it is naturally less wide, but nowhere under fourteen feet. The gradient averages 1—20 to 1—24. At a very few points, however, it is as steep as 1 in 15. If the hill portion of the road is excepted, where, being in zig-zag, it has very sharp angles, a light railway could be laid upon it in a surprisingly short time and at no considerable expense, the ground having been made very hard nearly all along the road.

The capital of £340,000 employed in the construction of the road was subscribed in the following manner: 1,000 shares of 1,000 rubles each, or 1,000,000 rubles original capital subscribed in Moscow; 1,000,000 rubles debentures taken by the Russian Government, and a further 500,000 rubles on condition that 700,000 rubles additional capital were subscribed, which was at once done principally by the original shareholders.

The speculation had from the very beginning a prospect of being very successful, even merely considered as trade route—a prospect which the British Government, capitalist, and merchant did not seem to grasp, but which was fully appreciated by the quicker and more far-seeing Russian official and trader. Any fair-minded person cannot help admiring the Russian Government for the insight, enterprise and sound statesmanship with which it lost no time in supporting the scheme (discarded by us as worthless), and this it did, not by empty-winded, pompous speeches and temporising promises, to which we have so long been accustomed, but by supplying capital in hard cash, for the double purpose of enhancing to its fullest extent Russian trade and of gaining the strategic advantages of such an enterprise, which are too palpable to be referred to again.

So it was, that while we in England relied on the everlasting and ever-idiotic notion that Russia would never have the means to take up the loan, being—as we are told—a bankrupt country with no resources, and a Government with no credit and no cash,—that we found ourselves left (and laughed

at), having lost an opportunity which will never present itself again, and which will eventually cost us the loss of Northern Persia, if not of the whole of Persia.

Russia—it is only too natural—having once set her foot, or even both feet, on Persian soil, now tries to keep out other nations—which, owing to her geographical position, she can do with no effort and no trouble—in order to enhance her youthful but solid and fast-growing industries and trade.

In the case of the Teheran road, the only one, it must be remembered, leading with any safety to the Persian capital, it is theoretically open to all nations. Practically, Russian goods alone have a chance of being conveyed by this route, owing to the prohibitive Customs duties exacted in Russia on foreign goods in transit for Persia. Russia is already indirectly reaping great profits through this law, especially on machinery and heavy goods that have no option and must be transported by this road. There is no other way by which they can reach Teheran on wheels. But the chief and more direct profit of the enterprise itself is derived from the high tolls which the Russian Company, with the authorisation of the Persian Government, has established on the road traffic, in order to reimburse the capital paid out and interest to shareholders.

The road tolls are paid at Resht (and at intermediate stations if travellers do not start from Resht), and amount to 4 krans == 1s. 8d. for each pack animal, whether it be a camel, a horse, a mule, or a donkey.

A post-carriage with four horses (the usual conveyance hired between Resht and Teheran) pays a toll of no less than 17s. 2d.

	s. d.
A carriage with 3 horses	12 6
" " 2 "	8 4
" " 1 horse	4 2
<i>A fourgon, or luggage van, 4 horses, £1 0s. 10d.</i>	

Passengers are charged extra and above these tolls, so that a landau or a victoria, for instance, actually pays £1 8s. for the right of using the road, and a *fourgon* with one's servants, as much as £1 13s. 2d.

The fares for the hire of the conveyance are very high:—

	£ s. d.
Landau	11 16 7
Victoria	10 16 7
Coupé	11 4 10
Fourgon	10 0 10

As only 72 lbs. of personal luggage are allowed in the landau or 65 lbs. in other carriages, and this weight must be in small packages, one is compelled to hire a second conveyance, a *fourgon*, which can carry 650 lbs. Every pound exceeding these weights is charged for at the rate of two shillings for every 13½ lbs. of luggage. The luggage is weighed with great accuracy before starting from Resht, and on arrival in Teheran. Care is taken to exact every half-penny to which the company is entitled on luggage fares, and much inconvenience and delay is caused by the Persian officials at the scales. It is advisable for the traveller to be present when the luggage is weighed, to prevent fraud.

It may be noticed that to travel the 200 miles, the distance from Resht to Teheran, the cost, without counting incidental expenses, tips (amounting to some £3 or more), etc.,

£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
Landau, 11 16 7 plus toll, 1 8 0		13 4 7
Fourgon, 10 0 10 plus toll, 1 13 2		11 14 0

Total		£24 18 7

which is somewhat high for a journey of only 72 to 80 hours.

This strikes one all the more when one compares it with the journey of several thousand miles in the greatest of luxury from London across Holland, Germany, Russia, and the Caspian to Enzeli, which can be covered easily by three five-pound notes.

As every one knows, the road from Piri-Bazaar to Kasvin and Teheran was opened for wheel traffic in January 1899.

I am told that in 1899—before the road was completed—a Persian speculator offered the sum of £200 a day to be paid in cash every evening, for the contract of the tolls. The offer was most emphatically refused, as the daily tolls even at that time amounted to between £270 and £300.

In these last three years the road has developed in a most astounding manner, and the receipts, besides being now considerably greater, are constantly increasing. The Russian shareholders and Government can indeed fairly congratulate themselves on the happy success which their well-thought-out investment has fairly won them.

CHAPTER VI

A journey by landau and four—Picturesque coachman—Tolls—Intense moisture—Luxuriant vegetation—Deschambe Bazaar—The silk industry of Ghilan—The cultivation and export of rice—The Governor's energy—Agriculture and Allah—The water question—The coachman's backshish—The White River—Olive groves—Halting places on the road—The effects of hallucination—Princes abundant.

We have seen how the road was made. Now let us travel on it in the hired landau and four horses driven by a wild-looking coachman, whose locks of jet-black hair protrude on either side of his

clean-shaven neck, and match in colour his black astrakan, spherical, brimless headgear. Like all good Persians, he has a much pleated frockcoat that once was black and is now of various shades of green. Over it at the waist he displays a most elaborate silver belt, and yet another belt of leather with a profusion of cartridges stuck in it and a revolver.

Why he did not run over half-a-dozen people or more as we galloped through the narrow streets of Resht town is incomprehensible to me, for the outside horses almost shaved the walls on both sides, and the splash-boards of the old landau ditto.

That he did not speaks volumes for the flexibility and suppleness of Persian men, women and children, of whom, stuck tight against the walls in order to escape being trampled upon or crushed to death, one got mere glimpses, at the speed one went.

The corners of the streets, too, bore ample testimony to the inaccuracy of drivers in gauging distances, and so did the hubs and splash-boards of the post-carriages, all twisted and staved in by repeated collisions.

It is with great gusto on the part of the drivers, but with a certain amount of alarm on the part of the passenger, that one's carriage chips off corner after corner of the road as one turns them, and one gets to thank Providence for making houses in Persia of easily-powdered mud instead of solid stone or bricks.

One's heart gets lighter when we emerge into the more sparsely inhabited districts where fields and heavy vegetation line the road, now very wide and more or less straight. Here the speed is greatly increased, the coachman making ample use of a long stock whip. In Persia one always travels full gallop.

After not very long we pull up to disburse the road toll at a wayside collecting house. There are a great many caravans waiting, camels, mules, donkeys, horsemen, *fourgons*, whose owners are busy counting hard silver krans in little piles of 10 krans each—a *toman*, equivalent to a dollar,—without which payment they cannot proceed. Post carriages have precedence over everybody, and we are served at once. A receipt is duly given for the money paid, and we are off again. The coachman is the cause of a good deal of anxiety, for on the chance of a handsome backshish he has indulged in copious advance libations of rum or votka, or both, the vapours of which are blown by the wind into my face each time that he turns round and breathes or speaks. That this was a case of the horses leading the coachman and not of a man driving the horses, I have personally not the shade of a doubt, for the wretch, instead of minding his horses, hung backwards, the whole way, from the high box, yelling, I do not know what, at the top of his voice, and making significant gestures that he was still thirsty. Coachmen of all countries invariably are.

We ran full speed into caravans of donkeys, scattering them all over the place; we caused flocks of frightened sheep to stampede in all directions, and only strings of imperturbable camels succeeded in arresting our reckless flight, for they simply would not move out of the way. Every now and then I snatched a furtive glance at the scenery.

The moisture of the climate is so great and the heat so intense, that the vegetation of the whole of Ghilan province is luxuriant,—but not picturesque, mind you. There is such a superabundance of vegetation, the plants so crammed together, one on the top of the other, as it were, all untidy, fat with moisture, and of such deep, coarse, blackish-green tones that they give the scenery a heavy leaden appearance instead of the charming beauty of more delicate tints of less tropical vegetation.

We go through Deschambe Bazaar, a place noted for its fairs.

Here you have high hedges of reeds and hopelessly entangled shrubs; there your eyes are rested on big stretches of agriculture,—Indian corn, endless paddy fields of rice and cotton, long rows of mulberry trees to feed silkworms upon their leaves. Silk is even to-day one of the chief industries of Ghilan. Its excellent quality was at one time the pride of the province. The export trade of dried cocoons has been particularly flourishing of late, and although prices and the exchanges have fluctuated, the average price obtained for them in Resht when fresh was from 20½ krans to 22½ krans (the kran being equivalent to about fivepence).

The cocoon trade had until recently been almost entirely in the hands of Armenian, French and Italian buyers in Resht, but now many Persian merchants have begun to export bales of cocoons direct to Marseilles and Milan, the two chief markets for silk, an export duty of 5 per cent. on their value being imposed on them by the Persian Government. The cocoons are made to travel by the shortest routes, *via* the Caspian, Baku, Batum, and the Black Sea.

The year 1900 seems to have been an exceptionally good year for the production and export of cocoons. The eggs for the production of silkworms are chiefly imported by Levantines from Asia Minor (Gimlek and Brussa), and also in small quantities from France. According to the report of Mr. Churchill, Acting-Consul at Resht, the quantity of cocoons exported during that year showed an increase of some 436,800 lbs. above the quantity exported the previous year (1899); and a comparison between the quantity exported in 1893 and 1900 will show at a glance the enormous apparent increase in the export of dried cocoons from Ghilan.

1893	76,160 lbs.	Value £6,475
1900	1,615,488 "	" £150,265

It must, however, be remembered that the value given for 1893 may be very incorrect.

Large meadows with cattle grazing upon them; wheat fields, vegetables of all sorts, vineyards, all pass before my eyes as in a kaleidoscope. A fine country indeed for farmers. Plenty of water—even too much of it,—wood in abundance within a stone's throw.

Next to the silk worms, rice must occupy our attention, being the staple food of the natives of Ghilan and constituting one of the principal articles of export from that province.

The cultivation and the export of rice from Ghilan have in the last thirty years become very important, and will no doubt be more so in the near future, when the mass of jungle and marshes will be cleared and converted into cultivable land. The Governor-General of Resht is showing great energy in the right direction by cutting new roads and repairing old ones on all sides, which ought to be of great benefit to the country.

In Persia, remember, it is not easy to learn anything accurately. And as for Persian statistics, unwise is the man who attaches any importance to them. Much as I would like to quote statistics, I cannot refrain from thinking that no statistics are a hundredfold better than slip-shod, haphazard, inaccurate ones. And this rule I must certainly apply to the export of rice from Ghilan to Europe, principally Russia, during 1900, and will limit myself to general remarks.

Extensive tracts of country have been cleared of reeds and useless vegetation, and converted into paddy fields, the natives irrigating the country in a primitive fashion.

It is nature that is mostly responsible if the crops are not ruined year after year, the thoughtless inhabitants, with their natural laziness, doing little more than praying Allah to give them plenty of rain, instead of employing the more practical if more laborious expedient of artificially irrigating their country in some efficient manner, which they could easily do from the streams close at hand. Perhaps, in addition to this, the fact that water—except rain-water—has ever to be purchased in Persia, may also account to a certain extent for the inability to afford paying for it. In 1899, for instance, rain failed to come and the crops were insufficient even for local consumption, which caused the population a good deal of suffering. But 1900, fortunately, surpassed all expectations, and was an excellent year for rice as well as cocoons.

We go through thickly-wooded country, then through a handsome forest, with wild boars feeding peacefully a few yards from the road. About every six farsakhs—or twenty-four miles—the horses of the carriage, and those of the fourgon following closely behind, are changed at the post-stations, as well as the driver, who leaves us, after carefully removing his saddle from the box and the harness of the horses. He has to ride back to his point of departure with his horses. He expects a present of two krans,—or more if he can get it—and so does the driver of the fourgon. Two krans is the recognised tip for each driver, and as one gets some sixteen or seventeen for each vehicle,—thirty-two or thirty-four if you have two conveyances,—between Resht and Teheran, one finds it quite a sufficient drain on one's exchequer.

As one gets towards Kudum, where one strikes the Sefid River, we begin to rise and the country gets more hilly and arid. We gradually leave behind the oppressive dampness, which suggests miasma and fever, and begin to breathe air which, though very hot, is drier and purer. We have risen 262 feet at Kudum from 77 feet, the altitude of Resht, and as we travel now in a south-south-west direction, following the stream upwards, we keep getting higher, the elevation at Rustamabad being already 630 feet. We leave behind the undulating ground, covered with thick forests, and come to barren hills, that get more and more important as we go on. We might almost say that the country is becoming quite mountainous, with a few shrubs here and there and scenery of moderate beauty, (for any one accustomed to greater mountains), but quite "wildly beautiful" for the ordinary traveller. We then get to the region of the grey olive groves, the trees with their contorted, thickly-set branches and pointed leaves. What becomes of the olives? They are exported to Europe,—a flourishing trade, I am told.

One bumps a great deal in the carriage, for the springs are not "of the best," and are hidden in rope bandages to keep them from falling apart. The road, too, is not as yet like a billiard table. The doors of the landau rattle continuously, the metal fastenings having long disappeared, and being replaced by bits of string.

One travels incessantly, baked in the sun by day and chilled by the cold winds at night, trying to get a little sleep with one's head dangling over the side of the carriage, one's legs cramped, and all one's bones aching. But this is preferable to stopping at any of the halting-places on the road, whether Russian or Persian, which are filthy beyond words, and where one is mercilessly swindled. Should one, however, be compelled to stop anywhere it is preferable to go to a thoroughly Persian place, where one meets at least with more courtesy, and where one is imposed upon in a more modest and less aggressive way than at the Russian places. It must, however, be stated that the Russian places are usually in charge of over-zealous Persians, or else in the hands of inferior Russian subjects, who try to make all they can out of their exile in the lonely stations.

I occasionally halted for a glass of tea at the Persian Khafe-Khanas, and in one of them a very amusing incident happened, showing the serious effects that hallucination may produce on a weak-minded person.

I had got off the carriage and had carried into the khafe-khana my camera, and also my revolver in its leather case which had been lying on the seat of the carriage. At my previous halt, having neglected this precaution, my camera had been tampered with by the natives, the lenses had been removed, and the eighteen plates most of them already with pictures on them—that were inside, exposed to the light and thrown about, with their slides, in the sand. So to avoid a repetition of the occurrence, and to prevent a probable accident, I brought all into the khafe-khana room and deposited the lot on the raised mud portion along the wall, seating myself next to my property. I ordered tea, and the attendant, with many salaams, explained that his fire had gone out, but that if I would wait a few minutes he would make me some fresh *chah*. I consented. He inquired whether the revolver was loaded, and I said it was. He proceeded to the further end of the room, where, turning his back to me, he began to blow upon the fire, and I, being very thirsty, sent another man to my fourgon to bring me a bottle of soda-water. The imprisoned gases of the soda, which had been lying for the whole day in the hot sun, had so expanded that when I removed the wire the cork went off with a loud report and unfortunately hit the man in the shoulder blade. By association of ideas he made so certain in his mind that it was the revolver that had gone off that he absolutely collapsed in a semi-faint, under the belief that he had been badly shot. He moaned and groaned, trying to reach with his hand what he thought was the wounded spot, and called for his son as he felt he was about to die. We supported him, and gave him some water and reassured him, but he had turned as pale as death.

"What have I done to you that you kill me?" he moaned pitifully.

"But, good man, you have no blood flowing,—look!"

A languid, hopeless glance at the ground, where he had fallen and sure enough, he could find no blood. He tried to see the wound, but his head could not revolve to a sufficiently wide arc of a circle to see his shoulder-blade, so in due haste we removed his coat and waistcoat and shirt, and after slow, but careful, keen examination, he discovered that not only there were no marks of flowing blood, but no trace whatever of a bullet hole in any of his garments. Even then he was not certain,

and two small mirrors were sent for, which, by the aid of a sympathising friend, he got at proper angles minutely to survey his whole back.

He eventually recovered, and was able to proceed with the brewing of tea, which he served with terribly trembling hand on the rattling saucer under the tiny little glass.

"It was a very narrow escape from death, sahib," he said in a wavering voice—"for it might have been the revolver."

There is nothing like backshish in Persia to heal all wounds, whether real or otherwise, and he duly received an extra handsome one.

In Persia the traveller is particularly struck by the number of Princes one encounters on the road. This is to a certain extent to be accounted for by the fact that the word *khan* which follows a great many Persian names has been translated, mainly by flattering French authors, into the majestic but incorrect word "Prince." In many cases the suffix of *khan* is an equivalent of Lord, but in most cases it is no more than our nominal "Esquire."

I met on the road two fellows, one old and very dignified; the other young, and who spoke a little French. He informed me that they were both Princes. He called his friend "*Monsieur le Prince, mon ami,*" and himself "*Monsieur le Prince, moi!*" which was rather amusing. He informed me that he was a high Customs official, and displayed towards his fellow countrymen on the road a great many qualities that revealed a very mean native indeed.

The elder one wore carpet slippers to which he had attached—I do not know how—an enormous pair of golden spurs! He was now returning from Russia. He was extremely gentleman-like and seemed very much annoyed at the behaviour of his companion. He begged me to believe that not all men in Persia were like his friend, and I quite agreed with him.

We travelled a great portion of the road together, and the old fellow was extremely civil. He was very well informed on nearly all subjects, and had belonged to the army. He pointed out to me the important sights on the road, such as Mount Janja (7,489 ft.) to the East.

After passing Rudbar (665 ft.) the road is mostly in narrow gorges between mountains. It is rocky and arid, with hardly any vegetation. The river has to be crossed by the new bridge, a handsome and solid structure, and we arrive at the village of Menjil or Menzil. The Russian station-house is the most prominent structure. Otherwise all is desert and barren. Grey and warm reddish tints abound in the dried-up landscape, and only a few stunted olive groves relieve the scenery with some vegetable life.

CHAPTER VII

Menzil and the winds—The historical Alamut mountain—A low plateau—Volcanic formation—Mol-Ali—A genuine case of smallpox—Characteristic sitting posture—A caravan of mules—Rugged country—The remains of a volcanic commotion—The old track—Kasvin, the city of misfortunes—The Governor's palace and palatial rest house—Earthquakes and famine—*Kanats*, the marvellous aqueducts—How they are made—Manufactures—Kasvin strategically.

PERHAPS Menzil should be mentioned in connection with the terrific winds which, coming from the north-east and from the south, seem to meet here, and blow with all their might at all times of the year. The traveller is particularly exposed to them directly above the river course on crossing the bridge. Menzil is celebrated for these winds, which are supposed to be the worst, in all Persia, but unpleasant as they may be to any one who has not experienced worse, they are merely gentle breezes as compared, for instance, with the wind storms of the Tibetan plateau. To the east there is a very mountainous region, the Biwarzin Yarak range, or Kuse-rud, averaging from 6,000 to 7,000 ft.; further north a peak of 7,850 ft., and south-west of the Janja, 7,489 ft., the high Salambar, 11,290 ft. On the historical Mt. Alamut the old state prisons were formerly to be found, but were afterwards removed to Ardebil.

From Menzil we have left the Sefid River altogether, and we are now in a very mountainous region, with a singular low plateau in the centre of an extensive alluvial plain traversed by the road. We cross the Shah Rud, or River of the King, and at Paichinar, with its Russian post-house, we have already reached an altitude of 1,800 ft. From this spot the road proceeds through a narrow valley, through country rugged and much broken up, distinctly volcanic and quite picturesque. It is believed that coal is to be found here.

Perhaps one of the prettiest places we had yet come to was Mol-Ali, a lovely shady spot with veteran green trees all round. While the horses were being changed I was asked by the khafe-khana man to go and inspect a man who was ill. The poor fellow was wrapped up in many blankets and seemed to be suffering greatly. He had very high fever and his was a genuine case of smallpox. Next to him, quite unconcerned, were a number of Persian travellers, who had halted here for refreshments. They were squatting on their heels, knees wide apart, and arms balanced, resting above the elbow on their knees—the characteristic sitting posture of all Asiatics. Very comfortable it is, too, when you learn to balance yourself properly and it leaves the free use of one's arms. The *kalian* was being passed round as usual, and each had a thimble-full of sugared tea.

I was much attracted by a large caravan of handsome mules, the animals enjoying the refreshing shade of the trees. They had huge saddles ornamented with silver pommels and rings and covered over with carpets. Variegated cloth or carpet or red and green leather saddle-bags hung on either side of the animals behind the saddles. The bridle and bit were richly ornamented with shells and silver or iron knobs.

The few mud houses in the neighbourhood had flat roofs and were not sufficiently typical nor inviting enough for a closer internal inspection.

We are now on a tributary of the Shah-rud on the new road, instead of the old caravan track, which we have left since Paichinar.

The country becomes more interesting and wild as we go on. In the undoubtedly volcanic formation of the mountains one notices large patches of sulphurous earth on the mountain-side, with dark red and black baked soil above it. Over that, all along the range, curious column-like, fluted rocks. Lower down the soil is saturated with sulphurous matter which gives it a rich, dark blue tone with greenish tints in it and bright yellow patches. The earth all round is of a warm burnt sienna colour, intensified, when I saw it, by the reddish, soft rays of a dying sun. It has all the appearance of having been subjected to abnormal heat. The characteristic shape of the peaks of the range is conical, and a great many deep-cut channels and holes are noticeable in the rocky sides of these sugar-loaf mountains, as is frequently the case in mountains of volcanic formation.

We rise higher and higher in zig-zag ~~through~~ rugged country, and we then go across an intensely interesting large basin, which must at a previous date have been the interior of an exploded and now collapsed volcano. This place forcibly reminded me of a similar sight on a grander scale,—the site of the ex-Bandaisan Mountain on the main island of Nippon in Japan, after that enormous mountain was blown to atoms and disappeared some few years ago. A huge basin was left, like the bottom part of a gigantic cauldron, the edges of which bore ample testimony to the terrific heat that must have been inside before the explosion took place. In the Persian scene before us, of a much older date, the basin, corroded as it evidently was by substances heated to a very high temperature and by the action of forming gases, had been to a certain extent obliterated by the softening actions of time and exposure to air. The impression was not so violent and marked as the one received at Bandaisan, which I visited only a few days after the explosion, but the various characteristics were similar.

In the basin was a solitary hut, which rejoiced in the name of Kort. These great commotions of nature are interesting, but to any one given to sound reflection they are almost too big for the human mind to grasp. They impress one, they almost frighten one, but give no reposeful, real pleasure in gazing upon them such as less disturbed scenery does. The contrasts in colour and shape are too violent, too crude to please the eye: the freaks too numerous to be comprehensible at a glance. Here we have a ditch with sides perfectly black-baked, evidently by lava or some other hot substance which has flowed through; further on big splashes of violent red and a great variety of warm browns. The eye roams from one spot to the other, trying to understand exactly what has taken place—a job which occupies a good deal of one's time and attention as one drives through, and which would occupy a longer time and study than a gallop through in a post landau can afford.

At Agha Baba we were again on the old track, quite flat now, and during the night we galloped easily on a broad road through uninteresting country till we reached Kasvin, 185 versts from Resht.

Kasvin, in the province of Irak, is a very ancient city, which has seen better days, has gone through a period of misfortune, and will in future probably attain again a certain amount of prosperity. It is situated at an altitude of 4,094 feet (at the Indo-European telegraph office), an elevation which gives it a very hot but dry, healthy climate with comparatively cool nights. The town is handsome, square in form, enclosed in a wall with towers.

The governor's palace is quite impressive, with a fine broad avenue of green trees leading from it to the spacious Kasvin rest-house. This is by far the best rest-house on the road to the Persian capital, with large rooms, clean enough for Persia, and with every convenience for cooking one's food. Above the doorway the Persian lion, with the sun rising above his back, has been elaborately painted, and a picturesque pool of stagnant water at the bottom of the steps is no doubt the breeding spot of mosquitoes and flies, of which there are swarms, to make one's life a misery.



MAKING A *Kanat*.

The palatial rest-house, the governor's palace, a mosque or two, and the convenient bath-houses for Mahomedans being barred, there is nothing particular to detain the traveller in Kasvin.

One hears that Kasvin occupied at one time a larger area than Teheran to-day. The remains of this magnitude are certainly still there. The destruction of the city, they say, has been due to many and varied misfortunes. Earthquakes and famines in particular have played an important part in the history of Kasvin, and they account for the many streets and large buildings in ruins which one finds, such as the remains of the Sufi Palace and the domed mosque. The city dates back to the fourth century, but it was not till the sixteenth century that it became the *Dar-el-Sultanat*—the seat of royalty—under Shah Tamasp. It prospered as the royal city until the time of Shah Abbas, whose wisdom made him foresee the dangers of maintaining a capital too near the Caspian Sea. Isfahan was selected as the future capital, from which time Kasvin, semi-abandoned, began its decline.

In 1870 a famine devastated the town to a considerable extent, but even previous to that a great portion of the place had been left to decay, so that to-day one sees large stretches of ruined houses all round the neighbourhood and in Kasvin itself. The buildings are mostly one-storied, very few indeed boasting of an upper floor. The pleasant impression one receives on entering the city is mostly caused by the quantity of verdure and vegetation all round.

One of the principal things which strike the traveller in Persia, especially on nearing a big city, is the literal myriads of curious conical heaps, with a pit in the centre, that one notices running across the plains in long, interminable rows, generally towards the mountains. These are the *kanats*, the astounding aqueducts with which dried-up Persia is bored in all directions underground, the canals that lead fresh water from the distant springs to the cities, to the villages, and to irrigate the fields. The ancient process of making these *kanats* has descended unchanged to the modern Persian, who is

really a marvellous expert—when he chooses to use his skill—at conveying water where Nature has not provided it. I watched some men making one of these *kanats*. They had bored a vertical hole about three feet in diameter, over which a wooden windlass had been erected. One man was working at the bottom of the shaft. By means of buckets the superfluous earth was gradually raised up to the surface, and the hole bored further. The earth removed in the excavation is then embanked all round the aperture of the shaft. When the required depth is attained a tunnel is pierced, mostly with the hands and a small shovel, in a horizontal direction, and seldom less than four feet high, two feet wide, just big enough to let the workman through. Then another shaft has to be made for ventilation's sake and to raise to the surface the displaced earth. Miles of these *kanats* are thus bored, with air shafts every ten to twenty feet distant. In many places one sees thirty, forty, fifty parallel long lines of these aqueducts, with several thousand shafts, dotting the surface of the ground.

Near ancient towns and villages one finds a great many of these *kanats* dry and disused at present, and nearly everywhere one sees people at work making fresh ones, for how to get water is one of the great and serious questions in the land of Iran. Near Kasvin these *kanats* are innumerable, and the water carried by them goes through the streets of the city, with holes here and there in the middle of the road to draw it up. These holes are a serious danger to any one given to walking about without looking where he is placing his feet. It is mainly due to these artificial water-tunnels that the plain of Kasvin, otherwise arid and oppressively hot, has been rendered extremely fertile.

There are a great many gardens with plenty of fruit-trees. Vineyards abound, producing excellent stoneless grapes, which, when dried, are mostly exported to Russia. Pomegranates, water-melons, cucumbers, and cotton are also grown. Excellent horses and camels are bred here.

Kasvin being the half-way house, as it were, between Resht and Teheran, and an important city in itself, is bound—even if only in a reflected manner—to feel the good effects of having through communication to the Caspian and the capital made so easy by the completion of the Russian road.

The silk and rice export trade for Bagdad has gone up during the last two years, and in the fertile plain in which Kasvin lies agriculture is beginning to look up again, although not quite so much as in the Resht district, which is naturally the first to reap benefit from the development of Northern Persia.

The chief manufactures of Kasvin are carpets, a kind of coarse cotton-cloth called *kerbas*, velvet, brocades, iron-ware and sword-blades, which are much appreciated by Persians.

There is a large bazaar in which many cheap European goods are sold besides the more picturesque articles of local manufacture.

From a strategical point of view, Kasvin occupies a position not to be overlooked, guarding as it does the principal entrance from the south into the Ghilan province.

CHAPTER VIII

Four thousand feet above sea-level—Castellated walls—An obnoxious individual—Luggage weighing—The strange figure of an African black—How he saved an Englishman's life—Teheran hotels—Interesting guests—Life of bachelors in Teheran—The Britisher in Persia—Home early—Social sets—Etiquette—Missionaries—Foreign communities—The servant question.

A FEW hours' rest to give one's aching bones a chance of returning into their normal condition and position, and amidst the profound salaams of the rest-house servants, we speed away towards Teheran, 130 versts more according to the Russian road measurement (about 108 miles). We gallop on the old, wide and flat road, on which the traffic alone diverts one,—long strings of donkeys, of camels, every now and then a splendid horse with a swaggering rider. We are travelling on the top of the plateau, and are keeping at an altitude slightly above 4,000 feet. Distant mountains lie to the north, otherwise there is absolutely nothing to see, no vegetation worth mentioning, everything dry and barren.

Now and then, miles and miles apart, comes a quadrangular or rectangular, castellated mud wall enclosing a cluster of fruit trees and vegetable gardens; then miles and miles again of dreary, barren country.

Were it not for the impudence of the natives—increasing to a maximum—there is nothing to warn the traveller that one is approaching the capital of the Persian Empire, and one finds one's self at the gate of the city without the usual excitement of perceiving from a distance a high tower, or a dome or a steeple or a fortress, or a landmark of some sort or other, to make one enjoy the approach of one's journey's end.

Abdulabad, 4,015 feet, Kishslak, 3,950 feet, Sankarabad, 4,210 feet, Sulimaneh, 4,520 feet, are the principal places and main elevations on the road, but from the last-named place the incline in the plateau tends to descend very gently. Teheran is at an altitude of 3,865 feet.

Six farsakhs from Teheran, where we had to change horses, an individual connected with the transport company made himself very obnoxious, and insisted on accompanying the carriage to Teheran. He was picturesquely attired in a brown long coat, and displayed a nickel-plated revolver, with a leather belt of cartridges. He was cruel to the horses and a nuisance to the coachman. He interfered considerably with the progress of the carriage and made himself unbearable in every possible way. When I stopped at a khafe-khana for a glass of tea, he actually removed a wheel of the carriage, which we had considerable difficulty in putting right again, and he pounded the coachman on the head with the butt of his revolver, in order, as far as I could understand, that he should be induced to go half-shares with him in the backshish that the driver would receive at the end of the stage.

All this provided some entertainment, until we reached the Teheran gate. Only half a mile more and I should be at the hotel. But man proposes and the Persian disposes. The carriage and fourgon were driven into a large courtyard, the horses were unharnessed, all the luggage removed from the fourgon and carriage, and deposited in the dust. A primitive scale was produced and slung to a

tripod, and each article weighed and weighed over again so as to take up as much of one's time as possible. Various expedients to impose upon me, having failed I was allowed to proceed, a new fourgon and fresh horses being provided for the journey of half a mile more, the obnoxious man jumping first on the box so as to prevent being left behind.

At last the hotel was reached, and here another row arose with a profusion of blows among a crowd of beggars who had at once collected and disputed among themselves the right of unloading my luggage.

A strange figure appeared on the scene. A powerful, half-naked African, as black as coal, and no less than six foot two in height. He sported a huge wooden club in his hand, which he whirled round in a most dangerous manner, occasionally landing it on people's skulls and backs in a sonorous fashion. The crowd vanished, and he, now as gently as possible, removed the luggage from the fourgon and conveyed it into the hotel.

The obnoxious man now hastily descended from his seat and demanded a backshish.

"What for?"

"Oh, sir," intervened a Persian gentleman present, "this man says he has annoyed you all the way, but he could not make you angry. He must have backshish! He makes a living by annoying travellers!"

In contrast to this low, depraved parasite, the African black seemed quite a striking figure,—a scamp, if you like, yet full of character. He was a dervish, with drunken habits and a fierce nature when under the influence of drink, but with many good points when sober. On one occasion an Englishman was attacked by a crowd of Persians, and was in danger of losing his life, when this man, with considerable bravery (not to speak of his inseparable mallet which he used freely), went to the rescue of the sahib and succeeded in saving him. For this act of courage he has ever since been supported by the charity of foreigners in Teheran. He unfortunately spends all his earnings in drink, and can be very coarse indeed, in his songs and imitations, which he delights in giving when under the influence of liquor. He hangs round the hotel, crying out "*Yahu! yahu!*" when hungry—a cry quite pathetic and weird, especially in the stillness of night.

There are two hotels in Teheran and several European and Armenian restaurants. The English hotel is the best,—not a dream of cleanliness, nor luxury, nor boasting of a cuisine which would remain impressed upon one's mind, except for its elaborate monotony,—but quite a comfortable place by comparison with the other European hotels of Persia. The beds are clean, and the proprietress tries hard to make people comfortable.

More interesting than the hotel itself was the curious crowd of people whom one saw at the dinner-table. I remember sitting down one evening to dinner with nine other people, and we represented no less than ten different nationalities! The tower of Babel sank almost into insignificance compared with the variety of languages one heard spoken all round, and one's polyglot abilities were tested to no mean extent in trying to carry on a general conversation. One pleasant feature of these dinners was the amount of talent and good-humour that prevailed in the company, and the absolute lack of distinction of class or social position. Side by side one saw a distinguished diplomat conversing with the Shah's automobile driver, and a noteworthy English member of Parliament on friendly terms with an Irish gentleman of the Indo-European Telegraphs. A burly, jolly Dutchman stood drinks all round to members of the Russian and English Banks alike, and a French *sage-femme* just arrived discussed her prospects with the hotel proprietress. The Shah's A.D.C. and favourite music-composer and pianist came frequently to enliven the evenings with some really magnificent playing, and by way of diversion some wild Belgian employees of the derelict sugar-factory used almost nightly to cover with insults a notable "*Chevalier d'industrie*" whose thick skin was amazing.

Then one met Armenians—who one was told had come out of jail,—and curio-dealers, mine prospectors, and foreign Generals of the Persian army.

Occasionally there was extra excitement when an engagement or a wedding took place, when the parties usually adjourned to the hotel, and then there was unlimited consumption of beer, nominally (glycerine really, for, let me explain, beer does not stand a hot climate unless a large percentage of glycerine is added to it), and of highly-explosive champagne and French wines, Château this and Château that—of Caspian origin.

Being almost a teetotaller myself, this mixed crowd—but not the mixed drink—was interesting to study, and what particularly struck me was the *bonhomie*, the real good-heartedness, and manly but thoughtful, genial friendliness of men towards one another, irrespective of class, position or condition, except, of course, in the cases of people with whom it was not possible to associate. The hard, mean, almost brutal jealousy, spite, the petty rancour of the usual Anglo-Indian man, for instance, does not exist at all in Persia among foreigners or English people. On the contrary, it is impossible to find more hospitable, more gentlemanly, polite, open-minded folks than the Britishers one meets in Persia.

Of course, it must be remembered, the type of Britisher one finds in Persia is a specially talented, enterprising and well-to-do individual, whose ideas have been greatly broadened by the study of several foreign languages which, in many cases, have taken him on the Continent for several years in his youth. Furthermore, lacking entirely the ruling "look down upon the native" idea, so prevalent in India, he is thrown much in contact with the Persians, adopting from them the courteous manner and form of speech, which is certainly more pleasant than the absurd rudeness of the "keep-aloo" notion which generally makes us hated by most Orientals.

The Britisher in Persia, with few exceptions, is a charming person, simple and unaffected, and ready to be of service if he can. He is not aggressive, and, in fact, surprisingly suave.

This abnormal feature in the British character is partly due to the climate, hot but very healthy, and to the exile to which the Briton has to reconcile himself for years to come. Indeed, Persia is an exile, a painful one for a bachelor, particularly. Woman's society, which at all times helps to make life sweet and pleasant, is absolutely lacking in Persia. European women are scarce and mostly married or about to get married. The native women are kept in strict seclusion. One never sees a native woman except heavily veiled under her *chudder*, much less can a European talk to her. The laws of Persia are so severe that anything in the shape of a flirtation with a Persian lady may cost the life of

Juliet or Romeo, or both, and if life is spared, blackmail is ever after levied by the police or by the girl's parents or by servants.

In Teheran all good citizens must be indoors by nine o'clock at night, and any one found prowling in the streets after that hour has to deal with the police. In the European quarter this rule is overlooked in the case of foreigners, but in the native city even Europeans found peacefully walking about later than that hour are taken into custody and conveyed before the magistrate, who satisfies himself as to the man's identity and has him duly escorted home.

There are no permanent amusements of any kind in Teheran. An occasional concert or a dance, but no theatres, no music-halls. There is a comfortable Club, where people meet and drink and play cards, but that is all.

Social sets, of course, exist in the Teheran foreign community. There are "The Telegraph" set, "the Bank," "the Legations." There is an uncommon deal of social etiquette, and people are most particular regarding calls, dress, and the number of cards left at each door. It looks somewhat incongruous to see men in their black frock-coats and silk tall hats, prowling about the streets, with mud up to their knees if wet, or blinded with dust if dry, among strings of camels, mules, or donkeys. But that is the fashion, and people have to abide by it.

There are missionaries in Teheran, American and English, but fortunately they are not permitted to make converts. The English, Russian and Belgian communities are the most numerous, then the French, the Dutch, the Austrian, the Italian, the American.

Taking things all round, the Europeans seem reconciled to their position in Teheran—a life devoid of any very great excitement, and partaking rather of the nature of vegetation, yet with a certain charm in it—they say—when once people get accustomed to it. But one has to get accustomed to it first.

The usual servant question is a very serious one in Teheran, and is one of the chief troubles that Europeans have to contend with. There are Armenian and Persian servants, and there is little to choose between the two. Servants accustomed to European ways are usually a bad lot, and most unreliable; but in all fairness it must be admitted that, to a great extent, these servants have been utterly spoilt by Europeans themselves, who did not know how to deal with them in a suitable manner. I repeatedly noticed in Teheran and other parts of Persia that people who really understood the Persian character, and treated subordinates with consideration, had most excellent servants—to my mind, the most intelligent and hard-working in the world—and spoke very highly of them.

CHAPTER IX

Teheran—The seat of the Kajar family—The square of the gun—Sanctuaries—The Top Meidan—Tramways—A railway—Opposition of the Mullahs and population—Destruction of a train—Mosques—Habitations—Extortion and blackmail—Persian philosophy.

A DESCRIPTION of Teheran is hardly necessary here, the city being so well-known, but for the help of people unfamiliar with its character a rough sketch of the place may be given.

Teheran, it must be remembered, has only been the capital of Persia for the last hundred years, when the capital was removed from Isfahan. Previous to that it was merely a royal resort and nothing more. In shape it was formerly almost circular—or, to be strictly accurate, polygonal, the periphery of the polygon measuring a *farsakh*, four miles. Like all Persian cities it was enclosed in a mud wall and a moat. Since then the city has so increased that an extension has been made to an outer boundary some ten miles in circumference, and marked by an uneven ditch, the excavated sand of which is thrown up to form a sort of battlement. Twelve gates, opened at sunrise and closed at night, give access to the town. The citadel, the ancient part of the city, contains the principal public buildings, the private residences of high officials, and the Shah's Palace. To the south of this are found the extensive domed bazaars and the commercial portion of Teheran. To the north lies the European quarter with the Legations, Banks and European shops.

We will not go as far back as the Afghan invasion in 1728 when, according to history, Teheran was looted and razed to the ground by the Afghans, but we will only mention the fact, which is more interesting to us, that it was not till about 1788 that the city was selected on account of its geographical position and of political necessities, as the seat of the Kajar dynasty by Agha Mohammed, who in 1796 became the first King of his family. The Kajar, as everybody knows, has remained the reigning dynasty of Persia to this day.

The most interesting point of Teheran, in the very centre of the city, is the old "Place du Canon," where on a high platform is a gigantic piece of ordnance enclosed by a railing. In the same square is a large reservoir of more or less limpid water, in which at all hours of the day dozens of people are to be seen bathing. But the big gun attracts one's attention principally. A curious custom, which is slowly being done away with, has made this spot a sanctuary. Whoever remains within touch or even within the shadow of the gun—whether an assassin, a thief, a bankrupt, an incendiary, a traitor or a highwayman,—in fact, a criminal of any kind cannot be touched by the police nor by persons seeking a personal revenge—the usual way of settling differences in Persia. A number of distinctly criminal types can always be observed near the gun and are fed by relations, friends, or by charitable people. Persians of all classes are extremely charitable, not so much for the sake of helping their neighbours in distress, as for increasing their claims to a seat in Paradise, according to the Mussulman religion.

These sanctuaries are common in Persia. The mosques, the principal shrines, such as Meshed, Kum, the houses of Mullahs, and in many cases the bazaars which are generally to be found adjoining places of pilgrimage, afford most convenient shelter to outlaws. The Mullahs are greatly responsible for the protection of miscreants. By exercising it they are able to show their power over the authorities of the country—a fact which impresses the masses. That is why in the neighbourhood of many mosques one sees a great number of ruffianly faces, unmistakable cut-throats, men and boys whose villainy is plainly stamped on their countenances. As long as they remain inside the sacred

precincts—which they can do if they like till they die of old age—they can laugh at the law and at the world at large. But let them come out, and they are done for.

The Shah's stables are considered a very safe sanctuary. Houses of Europeans, or Europeans themselves, were formerly considered sanctuaries, but the habit has—fortunately for the residents—fallen into disuse. I myself, when driving one day in the environs of Teheran, saw a horseman leading a man whose neck was tied to a substantial rope. Much to my surprise, when near enough, the prisoner jumped into my carriage, and it was only after some persuasion on my side and a few pulls at the rope from the rider at the other end that the unwelcome companion was made to dismount again.



THE MURDERER OF NASR-ED-DIN SHAH.

When in the company of high Mullahs evil characters are also inviolable.

The largest square in Teheran is the Top Meidan or "Cannon plain," where several small and antiquated pieces of artillery are enclosed in a fence. Two parallel avenues with trees cross the rectangular square at its longest side from north to south. In the centre is a large covered reservoir. The offices of both the Persian and Indo-European Telegraphs are in this square, and also the very handsome building of the Bank of Persia.

The square is quite imposing at first sight, having on two sides uniform buildings with long balconies. The *lunettes* of the archways underneath have each a picture of a gun, and on approaching the southern gates of the parallelogram a smile is provoked by the gigantic but crude, almost childish representations of modern soldiers on glazed tiles. To the west is the extensive drill ground for the Persian troops. Another important artery of Teheran runs from east to west across the same square.

One cannot but be interested on perceiving along the main thoroughfares of Teheran a service of horse tramways working quite steadily. But the rolling stock is not particularly inviting outwardly—much less inwardly. It is mostly for the use of natives and Armenians, and the carriages are very dirty. The horses, however, are good. The Tramway Company in the hands of Russian Jews, I believe, but managed by an Englishman and various foreigners—subalterns—was doing pretty fair business, and jointly with the tramways had established a capital service of "Voitures de remise," which avoided all the trouble and unpleasantness of employing street cabs. The carriages, mostly victorias, were quite good and clean.

Among other foreign things, Teheran can also boast of a railway—a mere steam tramway, in reality—of very narrow gauge and extending for some six miles south of the city to the shrine of Shah Abdul Hazim.

The construction of even so short and unimportant a line met with a great deal of opposition, especially from the priestly class, when it was first started in 1886 by a Belgian company—"La Société des Chemins de Fer et des Tramways de Perse." The trains began to run two years later, in 1888, and it was believed that the enormous crowds of pilgrims who daily visited the holy shrine would avail themselves of the convenience. Huge profits were expected, but unluckily the four or five engines that were imported at an excessive cost, and the difficulties encountered in laying down the line, which was continually being torn up by fanatics, and, most of all, the difficulty experienced in inducing pilgrims to travel in sufficient numbers by the line instead of on horses, mules or donkeys were unexpected and insoluble problems which the managers had to face, and which made the shareholders grumble. The expenses far exceeded the profits, and the capital employed in the construction of the line was already vastly larger than had been anticipated. One fine day, furthermore, a much-envied and respected pilgrim, who had returned in holiness from the famous shrine of Kerbalah, was unhappily run over and killed by a train. The Mullahs made capital of this accident and preached vengeance upon foreign importations, the work of the devil and distasteful to Allah the great. The railway was mobbed and the engine and carriages became a mass of débris.

There was nearly a serious riot about this in Teheran city; the trains continued to run with the undamaged engines, but no one would travel by them. Result? "La Compagnie des Chemins de Fer et des Tramways de Perse" went bankrupt. The whole concern was eventually bought up cheap by a Russian Company, and is now working again, as far as regards the railway, in a more or less spasmodic manner.

The tramway service connects the three principal gates of the outer wall of Teheran with the centre of the city "the Place des Canons" (Meidan-Top-Khaned).

Although there are a great many mosques in Teheran city there is not one of great importance or beauty. The Mesjid-i-shah, or the Shah's Mosque, is the most noteworthy, and has a very decorative glazed tiled façade. Then next in beauty is probably the mosque of the Shah's mother, but neither is

in any way uncommon for size, or wealth, architectural lines, or sacredness. Several mosques have colleges attached to them, as is the usual custom in Persia. Access to the interior of the mosques is not permitted to Europeans unless they have embraced the Mahomedan religion.

Outwardly, there are few native houses in Teheran that impress one with any remarkable features of wealth or beauty; in fact, they are nearly all wretchedly miserable,—a plastered mud or brick wall with a modest little doorway being all one sees from the street of the dwellings of even the richest and noblest of Persians. Inside matters are different. Frequently a miserable little tumbling-down gate gives access, after going through similarly miserable, narrow, low passages, to magnificent palaces and astoundingly beautiful and luxurious courts and gardens. I asked what was the reason of the poor outward appearance of these otherwise luxurious dwellings. Was it modesty,—was it to deceive envious eyes?

There are few countries where blackmail and extortion are carried on on a more extensive and successful scale than in Persia; all classes and conditions of people are exposed to the danger, and it is only by an assumed air of poverty that a certain amount of security is obtained. A miserable-looking house, it was explained by a Persian, does not attract the covetous eye of the passer-by; an unusually beautiful one does. "It is a fatal mistake," he added, "to let anybody's eye rest on one's possessions, whether he be the Shah, a minister, or a beggar. He will want to rest his hands upon them next, and then everything is gone. Besides," he said, "it is the inside of a house that gives pleasure and comfort to the occupier and his friends. One does not build a house to give pleasure and comfort to the people in the street. That is only vainglory of persons who wish to make their neighbours jealous by outward show. They usually have to repent it sooner or later."

There was more philosophy than European minds may conceive in the Persian's words—at least, for Persian householders.

CHAPTER X

Legations—Germany a stumbling-block to Russia's and England's supremacy—Sir Arthur Hardinge, British Minister in Teheran—His talent, tact, and popularity—The British Legation—Summer quarters—Legation guards—Removal of furniture.

As late as 1872 there were only four Legations in Teheran: the English, French, Russian and Turkish; but since then the Governments of Austria, Belgium, Holland, and the United States have established Legations in the Persian capital. By the Persians themselves only four are considered of first-class importance, viz.: the British, Russian, Turkish and Belgian Legations, as being more closely allied with the interests of the country. The Austrian Legation comes next to these in importance, then the German.

American interests are so far almost a negligible quantity in Persia, but Germany is attempting to force her trade into Persia. In future, if she can realise her railway schemes in Asia Minor, Germany will be a very serious stumbling-block to England's and Russia's supremacy, both in North and Southern Persia. Germany's representative in Teheran is a man of considerable skill and untiring energy. No doubt that when the opportune time comes and Germany is ready to advance commercially in the Persian market, England in particular will be the chief sufferer, as the British manufacturer has already experienced great difficulty in contending with the cheap German goods. Even in India, where transport is comparatively easy, German goods swamp the bazaars in preference to English goods. Much more will this be the case in Persia when the railway comes to the Persian boundary.

The German Minister is certainly sparing no efforts to foster German interests in Persia, and the enterprising Emperor William has shown every possible attention to the Shah on his visit to Berlin, in order that the racial antipathy, which for some reason or other Persians entertain towards Germans, may with all due speed be wiped out.

To us the British Legation is more interesting at present. We may well be proud of our present Minister, Sir Arthur Hardinge, a man of whose like we have few in our diplomatic service. I do not think that a man more fit for Persia than Sir Arthur could be found anywhere in the British Empire. He possesses quite extraordinary talent, with a quick working brain, a marvellous aptitude for languages—in a few months' residence in Persia he had mastered the Persian language, and is able to converse in it fluently—and is endowed with a gift which few Britishers possess, refined tact and a certain amount of thoughtful consideration for other people's feelings.

Nor is this all. Sir Arthur seems to understand Orientals thoroughly, and Persians in particular. He is extremely dignified in his demeanour towards the native officials, yet he is most affable and cheery, with a very taking, charming manner. That goes a much longer way in Persia than the other unfortunate manner by which many of our officials think to show dignity—sheer stiffness, rudeness, bluntness, clumsiness—which offends, offends bitterly, instead of impressing.

A fluent and most graceful speaker, with a strong touch of Oriental flowery forms of speech in his compliments to officials, with an eye that accurately gauges situations—usually in Persia very difficult ones—a man full of resource and absolutely devoid of ridiculous insular notions—a man who studies hard and works harder still—a man with unbounded energy and an enthusiast in his work—a man who knows his subject well, although he has been such a short time in Teheran—this is our British Minister at the Shah's Court.

Nor is this faint praise. Sir Arthur Hardinge has done more in a few months to save British prestige and to safeguard British interests in Persia than the public know, and this he has done merely by his own personal genius and charm, rather than by instructions or help from the home Government.

While in Teheran I had much opportunity of meeting a great many high Persian officials, and all were unanimous in singing the praises of our new Minister. Many of them seemed very bitter against some of his predecessors, but whether the fault was in the predecessors themselves or in the home Government, it is not for me to say. Anyhow, bygones are bygones, and we must make the best of our present opportunities. The staff at our Legation and Consulate is also first-class.

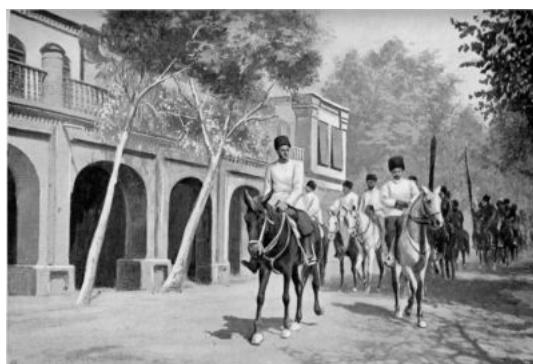
It is to be hoped, now that the South African war is over, that the Government will be able to devote more attention to the Persian Question, a far more serious matter than we imagine; and as extreme ignorance prevails in this country about Persia—even in circles where it should not exist—it would be well, when we have such excellent men as Sir Arthur Hardinge at the helm, in whose intelligence we may confidently and absolutely trust, to give him a little more assistance and freedom of action, so as to allow him a chance of safeguarding our interests properly, and possibly of preventing further disasters.

It is not easy for the uninitiated to realise the value of certain concessions obtained for the British by Sir Arthur Hardinge, such as, for instance, the new land telegraph line *via* Kerman Beluchistan to India. Of the petroleum concessions, of which one hears a great deal of late, I would prefer not to speak.

The Legation grounds in Teheran itself are extensive and beautiful, with a great many fine trees and shady, cool avenues. The Legation house is handsomely furnished, and dotted all over the gardens are the various other buildings for secretaries, attachés, and interpreters. All the structures are of European architecture—simple, but solid. In summer, however, all the Legations shift their quarters to what is called in Teheran "*la campagne de Golahek, de Tejerish, de Zargandeh,*"—by which gracefully misleading and misapplied terms are indicated the suburban residences of the Legations, at the foot of the arid, barren, hot, dusty Shamran range of mountains.

Golahek, where the British Legation is to be found, does actually boast of a few green trees in the Legation grounds; and a cluster or two of nominally "green" vegetation—really whitish brown—can be seen at Zargandeh, where the Russian and Belgian Legations are side by side, and Tejerish, where the Persian Foreign Office and many Persian officials have their summer residences.

The drive from Teheran to Golahek—seven miles—is dusty beyond words. There are wretched-looking trees here and there along the road, so dried and white with dust as to excite compassion. Half-way to Golahek the monotony of the journey is broken by a sudden halt at a khafe-khana, into which the coachman rushes, leaving the horses to take care of themselves, while he sips refreshing glasses of tea. When it suits his convenience he returns to splash buckets of water between the horses' legs and under their tails. This, he told me, in all seriousness, was to prevent sunstroke (really, the Persian can be humorous without knowing it), and was a preventive imported with civilised ways from Europe! The ears and manes of the animals are then pulled violently, after which the horses are considered able to proceed.



PERSIAN COSSACKS (TEHERAN) DRILLED BY RUSSIAN OFFICERS.

The Persian Government gives each Legation a guard of soldiers. The British Legation is guarded by infantry soldiers—an untidy, ragged, undisciplined lot, with cylindrical hats worn at all angles on the side of the head, and with uniforms so dirty and torn that it is difficult to discern what they should be like. Nearly all other Legations are provided with soldiers of the (Persian) Cossack regiment, who are infinitely better drilled and clothed than the infantry regiments. They are quite military in appearance. It was believed that these Cossacks, being drilled by Russian military instructors, would not be acceptable at the British Legation, hence the guard of infantry soldiers.

The Russian Legation has two additional Russian cavalry soldiers.

The country residences of all the Legations are quite comfortable, pretty and unpretentious, with the usual complement of furniture of folding pattern, so convenient but so inartistic, and a superabundance of cane chairs. Really good furniture being very expensive in Teheran, a good deal of the upholstery of the Teheran Legations is conveyed to the country residences for the summer months. Perhaps nothing is more amusing to watch than one of these removals to or from the country. Chairs, tables, sofas, and most private effects are tied to pack-saddles on ponies, mules or donkeys, with bundles of mattresses, blankets, and linen piled anyhow upon them, while the more brittle articles of the household are all amassed into a high pyramid on a gigantic tray and balanced on a man's head. Rows of these equilibrist, with the most precious glass and crockery of the homestead, can be noticed toddling along on the Golahek road, dodging carriages and cavaliers in a most surprising manner. They are said never to break even the smallest and most fragile articles, but such is certainly not the case with the heavily laden donkeys and mules, which often collide or collapse altogether, with most disastrous results to the heavier pieces of furniture.

On my arrival in Teheran I received a most charming invitation to go and stay at the British Legation, but partly owing to the fact that I wished to remain in town and so be more in touch with the natives themselves, partly because I wished to be unbiased in any opinion that I might form, I decided not to accept anybody's hospitality while in Teheran. This I am very glad I did, for I feel I can now express an opinion which, whether right or wrong, is my own, and has not been in any way influenced by any one.

CHAPTER XI

Visits to high Persian officials—Meftah-es-Sultaneh—Persian education—A college for orphans—Uncomfortable etiquette—The Foreign Office—H.E. Mushir-ed-

PERHAPS the description of one or two visits to high Persian officials may interest the reader.

Through the kindness of the Persian Legation in London I had received letters of introduction which I forwarded to their addresses on my arrival in Teheran. The first to answer, a few hours after I had reached Teheran, was Meftah-es-Sultaneh (Davoud), the highest person in the Foreign Office after the Minister, who in a most polite letter begged me to go to tea with him at once. He had just come to town from Tejerish, but would leave again the same evening.



THE EFTETAHIÉ COLLEGE, supported by Meftah-el-Mulk.

Escorted by the messenger, I at once drove to Meftah's Palace, outwardly, like other palaces, of extremely modest appearance, and entered by a small doorway leading through very narrow passages. Led by my guide, we suddenly passed through a most quaint court, beautifully clean and with a pretty fountain in the centre,—but no time was given me to rest and admire. Again we entered another dark passage, this time to emerge into a most beautiful garden with rare plants and lovely flowers, with a huge tank, fountains playing and swans floating gracefully on the water. A most beautiful palace in European architecture of good taste faced the garden.

I was admitted into a spacious drawing-room, furnished in good European style, where Meftah-es-Sultaneh—a rotund and jovial gentleman—greeted me with effusion. Although he had never been out of Persia, he spoke French, with a most perfect accent, as fluently as a Frenchman.

What particularly struck me in him, and, later, in many other of the younger generation of the upper classes in Persia, was the happy mixture of the utmost charm of manner with a keen business head, delightful tact and no mean sense of humour. Meftah-es-Sultaneh, for instance, spoke most interestingly for over an hour, and I was agreeably surprised to find what an excellent foreign education students can receive without leaving Persia. It is true that Meftah is an exceptionally clever man, who would make his mark anywhere; still it was nevertheless remarkable how well informed he was on matters not concerning his country.

He comes from a good stock. His father, Meftah-el-Mulk, was Minister member of the Council of State, a very wealthy man, who devoted much of his time and money to doing good to his country. Among the many praiseworthy institutions founded and entirely supported by him was the college for orphans, the Dabetsane Daneshe, and the Eftetahié School. The colleges occupy beautiful premises, and first-rate teachers are provided who instruct their pupils in sensible, useful matters. The boys are well fed and clothed and are made quite happy in every way.

Meftah told me that His Excellency the Minister of Foreign Affairs wished to see me, so it was arranged that I should drive to Tejerish the next morning to the Minister's country residence.

As early as five A.M. the following day I was digging in my trunks in search of my frock-coat, the only masculine attire in Persia that is considered decent, and without which no respectable man likes to be seen. Then for the tall hat; and with the temperature no less than 98° in the shade I started in an open victoria to drive the nine miles or so to the appointment.

Not being a Persian myself, and not quite sharing the same ideas of propriety, I felt rather ridiculous in my get-up, driving across the sunny, dusty and barren country until we reached the hills. I had to keep my feet under the seat of the carriage, for when the sun's rays (thermometer above 125°) struck my best patent-leather shoes, the heat was well-nigh intolerable.

At last, after going slowly up-hill through winding lanes enclosed in mud walls, and along dry ditches with desiccated trees on either side, we arrived at the *Campagne de Tejerish*, and pulled up in front of a big gate, at the residence of the Minister.

The trials of the long drive had been great. With the black frock-coat white with dust, my feet absolutely broiled in the patent shoes, and the perspiration streaming down my forehead and cheeks, I really could not help laughing at the absurdity of civilised, or semi-civilised fashions, and at the purposeless suffering inflicted by them.

There were a number of soldiers at the gate with clothes undone—they were practical people—and rusty muskets resting idle on a rack.

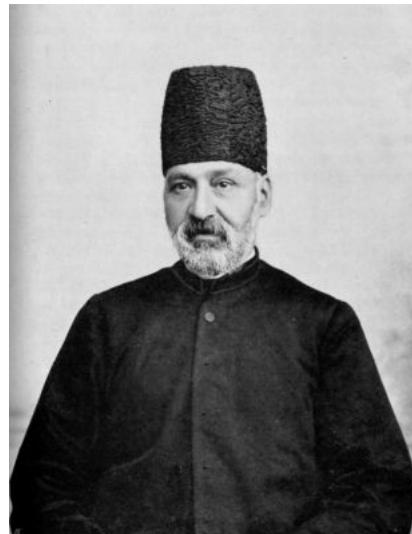
"Is Meftah-es-Sultaneh here?" I inquired.

"Yes, he is waiting for you," answered a soldier as he sprang to his feet. He hurriedly buttoned up his coat and hitched his belt, and, seizing a rifle, made a military salute in the most approved style.

An attendant led me along a well-shaded avenue to the house, and here I was ushered into a room where, round tables covered with green cloth, sat a great many officials. All these men wore pleated frock-coats of all tints and gradations of the colours of the rainbow. One and all rose and politely saluted me before I sat down.

Through the passage one could see another room in which a number of other officials, similarly clad and with black astrakan caps, were opening and sorting out correspondence.

Suddenly there was a hurried exit of all present—very much like a stampede. Up the avenue a stately, tall figure, garbed in a whitish frock-coat over which a long loose brown coat was donned, walked slowly and ponderously with a crowd of underlings flitting around—like mosquitoes round a brilliant light. It was *Mushir-ed-Doulet*, the Minister of Foreign Affairs. He turned round, now to one, then to another official, smiling occasionally and bowing gracefully, then glancing fiercely at another and sternly answering a third.



H. E. MUSHIR-ED-DOULET, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

I was rather impressed by the remarkable facility with which he could switch on extreme courtesy and severity, kindness and contempt. His face was at no time, mind you, subjected to very marked exaggerated changes or grimaces, such as those by which we generally expect emotions to show themselves among ourselves, but the changes in his expression, though slight, were quite distinct and so expressive that there was no mistake as to their meaning. A soft look of compassion; a hard glance of offended dignity; the veiled eyes deeply absorbed in reflection; the sudden sparkle in them at news of success, were plainly visible on his features, as a clerk approached him bringing correspondence, or asking his opinion, or reporting on one matter or another.

A considerable amount of the less important business was disposed of in this fashion, as the Minister strode up the avenue to the Foreign Office building, and more still with two or three of the more important personages who escorted him to his tents some little way from the avenue.

Meftah-es-Sultaneh, who had disappeared with the Minister, hurriedly returned and requested me to follow him. On a sofa under a huge tent, sat *Mushir-ed-Doulet*, the Minister, who instantly rose and greeted me effusively as I entered. He asked me to sit on his right on the sofa while *Meftah* interpreted. His Excellency only spoke Persian. Cigarettes, cigars, coffee and tea were immediately brought.

The Minister had a most intelligent head. As can be seen by the photograph here reproduced, he might have passed for a European. He was extremely dignified and business-like in his manner. His words were few and much to the point.

Our interview was a pleasant one and I was able to learn much of interest about the country. The Minister seemed to lay particular stress on the friendly relations of Russia and England, and took particular care to avoid comments on the more direct relations between Persia and Russia.

One point in our conversation which his Excellency seemed very anxious to clear up was, what would be the future of China? He seemed keenly interested in learning whether Russia's or England's influence had the supremacy in the Heavenly Empire, and whether either of these nations was actually feared by the Chinese.

"Will the Chinese ever be able to fight England or Russia with success? Were the Chinese well-armed during the war of 1900? If properly armed and drilled, what chances had the Chinese army of winning against the Allies? Would China be eventually absorbed and divided into two or more shares by European powers, or would she be maintained as an Empire?"

Although the Minister did not say so himself, I could not help suspecting that in his mind the similarity and probably parallel futures of China and Persia afforded ground for reflection.

There is no doubt that in many ways the two countries resemble one another politically, although Persia, owing to her more important geographical position, may have a first place in the race of European greed.

The interest displayed by Persians of all classes in the Chinese war of 1900 was intense, and, curiously enough, the feeling seemed to prevail that China had actually won the war because the Allies had retreated, leaving the capital and the country in the hands of the Chinese.

"More than in our actual strength," said a Persian official once to me, "our safety lies in the rivalry of Great Britain and Russia, between which we are wedged. Let those two nations be friends and we are done for!"

After my visit to the Minister of Foreign Affairs I had the pleasure of meeting the Prime Minister, the Minister of War, and the Minister of Public Works. I found them all extremely interesting and courteous and well up in their work. But although talent is not lacking in Persia among statesmen, the country itself, as it is to-day, does not give these men an opportunity of shining as brightly as they might. The whole country is in such a decayed condition that it needs a thorough overhauling.

Then only it might be converted into quite a formidable country. It possesses all the necessary requirements to be a first-class nation. Talent in exuberance, physical strength, a convenient geographical position, a good climate, considerable mineral and some agricultural resources, are all to be found in Persia. All that is wanted at present is the development of the country on a solid, reliable basis, instead of the insecure, unsteady intrigues upon which business, whether political or commercial, is unfortunately carried on in the present state of affairs.

No one realises this better than the well-to-do Persian, and nothing would be more welcome to him than radical reform on the part of the Shah, and the establishment of the land of Iran on unshakable foundations. With a national debt so ridiculously small as Persia has at present, there is no reason why, with less maladministration, with her industries pushed, with her army reorganised and placed on a serviceable footing, she should not rank as one of the first and most powerful among Asiatic independent nations.

We have seen what young Japan, against all odds, has been able to accomplish in a few years. All the more should a talented race like the Persians, situated to begin with in a far less remote position than Japan, and therefore more favourably for the acquisition of foreign ways, be able to emulate, and even in a short time surpass, the marvellous success attained by the little Islanders of the Far East.

It is grit that is at present lacking in Persia. The country has a wavering policy that is extremely injurious to her interests. One cannot fail to compare her to a good old ship in a dangerous sea. The men at her helm are perplexed, and cannot quite see a clear way of steering. The waves run high and there are plenty of reefs and rocks about. A black gloomy sky closes the horizon, forecasting an approaching cyclone. The ship is leaking on all sides, and the masts are unsteady; yet when we look at the number of rocks and reefs and dangers which she has steered clear through already, we cannot fail to have some confidence in her captain and crew. Maybe, if she is able to resist the fast-approaching and unavoidable clash of the wind and sea (figuratively England is the full-blown wind, Russia the sea)—she may yet reach her destination, swamped by the waves, dismantled, but not beyond repair. Her damage, if one looks at her with the eye of an expert, is after all not so great, and with little present trouble and expense she will soon be as good as new. Not, however, if she is left to rot much longer.

Such is Persia at present. The time has come when she must go back into the shelter of a safe harbour, or face the storm.

CHAPTER XII

The Persian army—The Persian soldier as he is and as he might be—When and how he is drilled—Self-doctoring under difficulties—Misappropriation of the army's salary—Cossack regiments drilled by Russian officers—Death of the Head Mullah—Tribute of the Jews—The position of Europeans—A gas company—How it fulfilled its agreement.

A PAINFUL sight is the Persian army. With the exception of the good Cossack cavalry regiment, properly fed, dressed, armed and drilled by foreign instructors such as General Kossackowski, and Russian officers, the infantry and artillery are a wretched lot. There is no excuse for their being so wretched, because there is hardly a people in Asia who would make better soldiers than the Persians if they were properly trained. The Persian is a careless, easy-going devil, who can live on next to nothing; he is a good marksman, a splendid walker and horseman. He is fond of killing, and cares little if he is killed—and he is a master at taking cover. These are all good qualities in a soldier, and if they were brought out and cultivated; if the soldiers were punctually paid and fed and clothed and armed, there is no reason why Persia should not have as good an army as any other nation. The material is there and is unusually good; it only remains to use it properly.



PERSIAN SOLDIERS—THE BAND.



RECRUITS LEARNING MUSIC.

I was most anxious to see the troops at drill, and asked a very high military officer when I might see them.

"We do not drill in summer," was the reply, "it is too hot!"

"Do you drill in winter?"

"No, it is too cold."

"Are the troops then only drilled in the autumn and spring?"

"Sometimes. They are principally drilled a few days before the Shah's birthday, so that they may look well on the parade before his Majesty."

"I suppose they are also only dressed and shod on the Shah's birthday?"

"Yes."

"What type and calibre rifle is used in the Persian army?"

"Make it plural, as plural as you can. They have every type under the sun. But," added the high military officer, "we use of course 'bullet rifles' (*fusils à balle*) not 'small shot guns'!"

This "highly technical explanation" about finished me up.

As luck or ill-luck would have it, I had an accident which detained me some four weeks in Teheran. While at the Resht hotel, it may be remembered how, walking barefooted on the matting of my room, an invisible germ bored its way into the sole of my foot, and I could not get it out again. One day, in attempting to make its life as lively as the brute made my foot, I proceeded to pour some drops of concentrated carbolic acid upon the home of my invisible tenant. Unluckily, in the operation my arm caught in the blankets of my bed, and in the jerk the whole contents of the bottle flowed out, severely burning all my toes and the lower and upper part of my foot, upon which the acid had quickly dripped between the toes.

With the intense heat of Teheran, this became a very bad sore, and I was unable to stand up for several days. Some ten days later, having gone for a drive to get a little air, a carriage coming full gallop from a side street ran into mine, turning it over, and I was thrown, injuring my leg very badly again; so with all these accidents I was detained in Teheran long enough to witness the Shah's birthday, and with it, for a few days previous, the "actual drilling of the troops."

I have heard it said, but will not be responsible for the statement, that the troops are nearer their full complement on such an auspicious occasion than at any other time of the year, so as to make a "show" before his Majesty. Very likely this is true. When I was in Teheran a great commotion took place, which shows how things are occasionally done in the land of Iran. The ex-Minister of War, Kawam-ed-douleh, who had previously been several times Governor of Teheran, was arrested, by order of the Shah, for embezzling a half year's pay of the whole Persian army. Soldiers were sent to his country residence and the old man, tied on a white mule, was dragged into Teheran. His cap having been knocked off—it is a disgrace to be seen in public without a hat—his relations asked that he should be given a cap, which concession was granted, on payment of several hundred tomans. A meal of rice is said to have cost the prisoner a few more hundred tomans, and so much salt had purposely been mixed with it that the thirsty ex-Minister had to ask for copious libations of water, each tumbler at hundreds of tomans.

Several other high officials were arrested in connection with these army frauds, and would probably have lost their heads, had it not been for the special kindness of the Shah who punished them by heavy fines, repayment of the sums appropriated, and exile. It is a well-known fact in Persia that whether the frauds begin high up or lower down in the scale of officials, the pay often does not reach the private soldier, and if it does is generally reduced to a minimum.

The food rations, too, if received by the men at all, are most irregular, which compels the soldiers to look out for themselves at the expense of the general public. This is a very great pity, for with what the Shah pays for the maintenance of the army, he could easily, were the money not appropriated for other purposes, keep quite an efficient little force, properly instructed, clothed, and armed.

The drilling of the soldiers, which I witnessed just before the Shah's birthday, partook very much of the character of a theatrical performance. The drilling, which hardly ever lasted more than a couple of hours a day, was limited to teaching the soldiers how to keep time while marching and presenting arms. The brass bands played *fortissimo*—but not *benissimo*—all the time, and various evolutions were gone through in the spacious *place d'armes* before the Italian General, in Persian employ, and a bevy of highly-dressed Persian officers. There was a great variety of ragged uniforms, and head-gears, from kolah caps to brass and tin helmets, and the soldiers' ages ranged from ten to sixty.

The soldiers seemed very good-humoured and obedient, and certainly, when I saw them later before the Shah in their new uniforms, they looked quite different and had not the wretched appearance

But these infantry soldiers do not bear comparison with the Russian-drilled Persian Cossacks. The jump is enormous, and well shows what can be done with these men if method and discipline are used. Of course perfection could not be expected in such a short time, especially considering the difficulties and interference which foreign officers have to bear from the Persians, but it is certainly to be regretted that such excellent material is now practically wasted and useless.

There were several other excitements before I left Teheran. The head Mullah—a most important person—died, and the whole population of Teheran turned out to do him honour when his imposing funeral took place. Curiously enough, the entire male Jewish community marched in the funeral procession—an event unprecedented, I am told, in the annals of Persian Mussulman history. The head Mullah, a man of great wisdom and justice, had, it was said, been very considerate towards the Jews and had protected them against persecution: hence this mark of respect and grief at his death.

The discovery of the ex-Minister of War's frauds, the death of the head Mullah, the reported secret attempts to poison the Shah, the prospects of a drought, the reported murder of two Russians at Resht, and other minor sources of discontent, all coming together, gave rise to fears on the part of Europeans that a revolution might take place in Teheran. But such rumours are so very frequent in all Eastern countries that generally no one attaches any importance to them until it is too late. Europeans are rather tolerated than loved in Persia, and a walk through the native streets or bazaars in Teheran is quite sufficient to convince one of the fact. Nor are the Persians to be blamed, for there is hardly a nation in Asia that has suffered more often and in a more shameful manner from European speculators and adventurers than the land of Iran.

Perhaps the country itself, or rather the people, with their vainglory and empty pomp, are particularly adapted to be victimised by impostors and are easy preys to them. Some of the tricks that have been played upon them do not lack humour. Take, for instance, the pretty farce of the *Compagnie générale pour l'éclairage et le chauffage en Perse*, which undertook to light the city of Teheran with no less than one thousand gas lights. Machinery was really imported at great expense from Europe for the manufacture of the gas—many of the heavier pieces of machinery are still lying on the roadside between Resht and Teheran—extensive premises were built in Teheran itself, and an elaborate doorway with a suitable inscription on it, is still to be seen; but the most important part of all—the getting of the coal from which the gas was to be extracted—had not been considered. The Lalun coal mines, which offered a gleam of hope to the shareholders, were exploited and found practically useless. The Company and Government came to loggerheads, each accusing the other of false dealing, and the result was that the Persians insisted on the Company lighting up Teheran with the agreed 1,000 lights. If gas could not be manufactured, oil lights would do. There was the signed agreement and the Company must stick to it.

The Company willingly agreed, but as the document did not specify the site where each lamp-post should be situate nearly all were erected, at a distance of only a few feet from one another—a regular forest of them—in the two main streets of the European settlement.

One single man is employed after dark to set the lamps alight, and when he has got to the end of the two streets he proceeds on his return journey to blow them all out again. By ten o'clock everything is in perfect darkness.

The Company now claim that they have fulfilled their agreement!

The Belgian Company for the manufacture of Beetroot Sugar was another example of how speculations sometimes go wrong, and no wonder. In theory the venture seemed quite sound, for the consumption of sugar in Persia is large, and if it had been possible to produce cheap sugar in the country instead of importing it from Russia, France and India, huge profits would have been probable; but here again the same mistake was made as by the gas company. The obtaining of the raw material was neglected.

The sugar refinery was built at great cost in this case, too, machinery was imported to manufacture the three qualities of sugar most favoured by the Persians—loaf sugar, crystallised sugar, and sugar-candy,—but all this was done before ascertaining whether it was possible to grow the right quality of beetroot in sufficient quantities to make the concern pay. Theoretically it was proved that it would be possible to produce local sugar at a price which, while leaving the Company a huge profit, would easily beat Russian sugar, by which French and Indian sugar have now been almost altogether supplanted.

A model farm was actually started (and is still in existence) near Shah-Abdul Azim, where beetroot was to be grown in large quantities, the experts declaring that the soil was better suited for the crop than any to be found in Europe. Somehow or other it did not answer as well as expected. Moreover, the question of providing coal for the engines proved—as in the case of the Gas Company—to be another serious stumbling block. An attempt to overcome this difficulty by joining with the Gas Company in working the Lalun Mines was made, but, alas! proved an expensive failure.

Moreover, further difficulties were encountered in obtaining the right manure for the beetroots, in order that the acids, which delay crystallisation, might be eliminated; and the inexperience, carelessness and reluctance with which the natives took up the new cultivation—and, as it did not pay, eventually declined to go on with it—render it by no means strange that the sugar factory, too, which was to make the fortunes of so many became a derelict enterprise.

CHAPTER XIII

Cash and wealth—Capital as understood by Persians—Hidden fortunes—Forms of extravagance—Unbusiness-like qualities—Foreign examples—Shaken confidence of natives in foreigners—Greed for money—Small merchants—Illicit ways of increasing wealth—The Persian a dreamer—Unpunctuality—Time no money and no object—Hindrance to reform—Currency—Gold, silver, and copper—Absorption of silver—Drainage of silver into Transcaspia—Banknotes—The fluctuations of the Kran—How the poorer classes are affected by it—Coins old and new—Nickel coins—The *Shai* and its subdivisions.

THE Persian does not understand the sound principles on which alone extensive business can be successful. Partly owing to prevailing circumstances he is under the misapprehension that hard cash is synonymous with wealth, and does not differentiate between treasure, savings, and savings transformed into capital. This is probably the main cause of the present anaemic state of business in the Shah's Empire. Thus, when we are told there is in Persia enormous "capital" to be invested, we are not correctly informed. There are "enormous accumulations of wealth" lying idle, but there is no "capital" in the true meaning of the word. These huge sums in hard cash, in jewellery, or bars of gold and silver, have been hidden for centuries in dark cellars, and for any good they are to the country and commerce at large might as well not exist at all.

Partly owing to the covetousness of his neighbours, partly owing to a racial and not unreasonable diffidence of all around him, and to the fact that an Asiatic always feels great satisfaction in the knowledge that he has all his wealth within his own reach and protection, rich men of Persia take particular care to maintain the strictest secrecy about their possessions, and to conceal from the view of their neighbours any signs which might lead them to suspect the accumulation of any such wealth. We have already seen how even the houses of the wealthiest are purposely made humble outwardly so as to escape the notice of rapacious officials, and it is indeed difficult to distinguish from the outside between the house of a millionaire and that of a common merchant.

The Persian, it must be well understood, does not hide his accumulated treasure from avaricious reasons; on the contrary, his inclinations are rather toward extravagance than otherwise, which extravagance he can only satisfy under a mask of endless lies and subterfuges. No honest ways of employing his wealth in a business-like and safe manner are open to the rich Persian under the present public maladministration, nor have the foreign speculations in the country offered sufficient examples of success to induce natives to embark upon them again. Far from it; these enterprises have even made Persians more sceptical and close than before, and have certainly not shown foreign ways of transacting business at the best.

That is why, no other way being open to him, the Persian who does wish to get rid of his wealth, prefers to squander his money, both capital and income (the latter if he possesses land), in luxurious jewellery and carpets, and in unhealthy bribery and corruption, or in satisfying caprices which his voluptuous nature may suggest. The result? The Persian is driven to live mostly for his vanity and frivolity—two unbusiness-like qualities not tending to the promotion of commercial enterprise on a large scale, although it is true that in a small way his failings give rise and life to certain industries. For instance, even in remote, poor and small centres where food is scarce and the buildings humble, one invariably finds a goldsmith, filigree-workers and embroidery makers, whereas the necessities of life may be more difficult to obtain.

Of course Persia contains a comparatively small number of Persians of a more adventurous nature, men who have travelled abroad and have been bitten with the Western desire for speculation to increase their money with speed, if not always with safety; but even these men have mostly retired within their shells since the colossal *fiascos* of the speculations started in Persia by foreign "company promoters." A considerable number of Persians, seduced by glowing prospectuses and misplaced faith in everything foreign, were dreadfully taken in by the novel experiments—everything novel attracts the Persian considerably—and readily unearthed solid gold and silver bars, that had lain for centuries in subterranean hiding-places, and now came out to be converted into shares in the various concerns, hardly worth the paper on which they were printed, but promising—according to the prospectus—to bring the happy possessors fabulous incomes.

We have seen how the Sugar Refinery, the Glass Factory, the "Gas" Company—a more appropriate name could not have been given—and the ill-fated Mining Company have created well-founded suspicion of foreign ways of increasing one's capital, nor can we with any fairness blame the Persians for returning to their old method of slow accumulation. True enough, a fortune, if discovered, has a fair possibility of being seized in the lump by a greedy official, but that is only a possibility; whereas, when invested in some foreign speculations the loss becomes a dead certainty! More even than the actual loss of the money, the Persians who burned their fingers by meddling with foreign schemes felt the scorn of their friends, of whom they had become the laughing stock.

There is no doubt that to-day the confidence of the natives towards foreigners has been very much shaken, and excepting a few men whom they well know, trust and respect, they regard most Europeans as adventurers or thieves. The "treasuring" of capital instead of the investment of it is, therefore, one of the reasons why industries in Persia seldom assume large proportions. It is only the small merchant, content to make a humble profit, who can prosper in his own small way while more extensive concerns are distrusted.

But it must not be understood that Persians do not care for money. There is, on the contrary, hardly a race of people on the face of the earth with whom the greed for money is developed to such an abnormal extent as in all classes in the land of Iran! But, you will ask, how can money be procured or increased fast and without trouble in a country where there is no commercial enterprise, where labour is interfered with, where capital cannot have a free outlet or investment? An opening has to be found in illicit ways of procuring wealth, and the most common form adopted is the loan of money at high interest on ample security. As much as 50 per cent., 80 per cent., 100 per cent. and even more is demanded and obtained as interest on private loans, 15 per cent. being the very lowest and deemed most reasonable indeed! (This does not apply to foreign banks.) All this may seem strange in a Mussulman country, where it is against all the laws of the Koran to lend money at usury, and it is more strange still to find that the principal offenders are the Mullahs themselves, who reap large profits from such illegal financial operations.

The Persian is a dreamer by nature; he cannot be said to be absolutely lazy, for he is always absorbed in deep thought—what the thoughts are it does not do to analyse too closely—but he devotes so much time to thinking that he seldom can do anything else. His mind—like the minds of all people unaccustomed to hard work and steady, solidly-built enterprise—runs to the fantastic, and he ever expects immense returns for doing nothing. The returns, if any, and no matter how large they may be, are ever too small to satisfy his expectations.

As for time, there is no country where it is worth less than to the natives of Persia. The *mañana* of the Spaniards sinks into perfect insignificance when compared with the habits of the land of Iran. Punctuality is unknown—especially in payments, for a Persian must take time to reflect over

everything. He cannot be hurried. A three months' limit of credit—or even six months—seems outrageously short in the eyes of Persians. Twelve months and eighteen, twenty, or twenty-four months suit him better, but even then he is never ready to pay, unless under great pressure. He does disburse the money in the end, capital and interest, but why people should worry over time, and why it should matter whether payment occurs to-day or to-morrow are quite beyond him.

If he does transact business, days are wasted in useless talk and compliments before the subject with which he intends to deal is incidentally approached in conversation, and then more hours and days and weeks, even months have to elapse before he can make up his mind what to do. Our haste, and what we consider smartness in business, are looked upon by the Persian as quite an acute form of lunacy,—and really, when one is thrown much in contact with such delightful placidity, almost torpor, and looks back upon one's hard race for a living and one's struggle and competition in every department, one almost begins to fancy that we are lunatics after all!



THE ARRIVAL OF A CARAVAN OF SILVER AT THE IMPERIAL BANK OF PERSIA.

The Persian must have his hours for praying, his hours for ablutions, more hours for meditation, and the rest for sleep and food. Whether you hasten or not, he thinks, you will only live the number of years that God wills for you, and you will live those years in the way that He has destined for you. Each day will be no longer and no shorter, your life no sadder and no happier. Why then hurry?

Amid such philosophic views, business in European fashion does not promise to prosper.

Unable to attach a true meaning to words—his language is beautiful but its flowery form conduces to endless misunderstandings—casual to a degree in fulfilling work as he has stipulated to do it; such is the Persian of to-day. Whether the vicissitudes of his country, the fearful wars, the famines, the climate, the official oppression have made him so, or whether he has always been so, is not easy to tell, but that is how he is now.

Besides all this, each man is endowed with a maximum of ambition and conceit, each individual fully believing himself the greatest man that ever lived and absolute perfection. Moreover the influence of Mullahs is used to oppose reform and improvement, so that altogether the economic development of production, distribution and circulation of capital is bound to be hampered to no mean extent. On examining things carefully it seems almost astonishing that the trade of Persia should be as well developed as it is.

Another difficulty in the way is the currency, which offers some interesting lessons, and I am indebted to the author of a paper read before the Statistical Society for the following details.

Gold is not produced in Persia. Bar gold is imported in very small quantities only. Gold coin is a mere commodity—is quite scarce, and is mostly used for presents and hoarding. It is minted principally from Russian Imperials and Turkish pounds which drift into Persia in small quantities in the course of business. Goldsmiths, too, in their work, make use of foreign coins, although some gold and silver bullion is imported for manufacturing purposes.

Silver, too, is not obtainable in Persia except in very small quantities, and the imported silver comes from Great Britain, *via* the Gulf or *via* Hamburg and Russia. In the year 1901 the Persian Government, in connection with the Russian Loan, imported some three million tomans' worth of silver to be minted, and the Imperial Bank of Persia another million tomans; while some 500,000 tomans more were brought into the country by other importers. But under normal circumstances the annual output hardly ever exceeds three to four million tomans. In 1900 it was something between 2,000,000 and 2,500,000 tomans.

The Mint—like all other institutions of Persia—is in a tumbling-down condition, with an ancient plant (1877) so obsolete and worn as to be almost useless. Partly owing to the insufficient production of coin, partly because of the export in great quantities of Persian silver coin into Transcaspia, and, last but not least, owing to the Persian custom of "making a corner" by speculators, the commercial centres of Persia suffer from a normal dearth of silver coins. Persian silver coin has for the foregoing reasons a purchasing power of sometimes 20 per cent. beyond its intrinsic value. In distant cities, like Yezd or Kerman, it is difficult to obtain large sums in silver coin at face value, as it disappears into the villages almost as soon as it arrives by caravan or post. New coin is generally in great demand and commands a premium.

So the yearly drain of silver coin from Teheran as soon as it is minted is very considerable, especially to the north, north-east and north-west provinces. This coin does not circulate but is almost entirely absorbed and never reappears, the people themselves holding it, as we have seen, as treasure, and huge quantities finding their way into Transcaspia and eventually into Afghanistan, where Persian coin is current and at a premium, especially on the border land.

In Transcaspia Persian coin is cherished because the nominally equivalent Persian coin contains a much larger quantity of silver than the Russian. Russian silver is a mere token of currency, or, at best, stands midway between a token and a standard or international currency, and its difference when compared with the Persian coin amounts to no less than 21.92 per cent. in favour of the Persian. Persian coin, although defective and about 2 per cent. below legal weight and fineness, is a standard or international currency.

It appears that a good deal of the silver exported into Transcaspia finds its way to Chinese Turkestan, where it is converted into bars and ingots, and is used for the inland trade to China. The Russian Government have done all in their power to prevent the competition of Persian and Russian coins in their Transcaspian provinces. A decree was issued some eleven years ago forbidding the importation, and in 1897 a second Ukase further prohibited foreign silver from entering the country after the 13th of May (1st of May of our calendar), and a duty of about 20 per cent. was imposed on silver crossing the frontier. All this has resulted in silver entering the provinces by smuggling instead of openly, but it finds its way there in large quantities just the same as before.

The Government of Persia does not issue bank-notes, which would be regarded with suspicion among the people, but it is interesting to find that the monopoly granted to the Imperial Bank of Persia for the issue of paper money has had excellent results, in Teheran particularly, where the Bank is held in high esteem and the notes have been highly appreciated. In other cities of Persia which I visited, however, the notes did not circulate, and were only accepted at the Bank's agencies and in the bazaar by some of the larger merchants at a small discount.

Naturally, with the methods adopted by Persians, and the insecurity which prevails everywhere, the process of convincing the natives that a piece of printed paper is equivalent to so many silver krans, and that the silver krans will surely be produced in full on demand is rather a slow one; but the credit of the Imperial Bank and the popular personality of Mr. Rabino, the manager, have done much towards dispelling the suspicions, and since 1890 the notes have assumed a considerable place in the circulation. In September 1890 the circulation of them amounted to 29,000 tomans; in 1895 it had gradually increased to 254,000 tomans, and by leaps and bounds had reached the sum of 1,058,000 in 1900.^[1] It is rather curious to note that in the previous year, 1899, the note circulation was 589,000 tomans, and became very nearly double in the following twelve months.

This only applies to Teheran and the principal cities; in the villages, and in out-of-the-way towns, notes are out of the question, and even silver coins are very scarce. A two-kran piece of the newer type is seldom found, and only one-kran pieces, little irregular lumps of silver, are occasionally to be seen. Copper is really the currency and is a mere subsidiary or token coinage with a value fluctuating according to local dearth or other causes at almost every place one goes to.

The precarious system of farming, accompanied by the corruption of officials, has given an opportunity for most frequent and flagrant abuses in the excessive over-issue of copper coin, so that in many cities copper issued at the nominal value of 20 shais per kran was current at 30, 40, 50, and even, in Eastern Persia, at 80 shais per kran. I myself, on travelling through Persia, never knew exactly what a kran was worth, as in almost every province I received a different exchange of shais for my krans. In Birjand and Sistan, particularly, the exchange differed very considerably.

This state of maladministration affects the poorer classes, for the copper currency forms their entire fortune. On coming to the throne the present Shah, with praiseworthy thoughtfulness, endeavoured to put a stop to this cause of misery in his people, and ordered the Government to withdraw some 720,000 tomans' worth of copper coins at 25 to 30 shais per kran. This had a good effect, and although much of the depreciated coin is still in circulation, particularly in out-of-the-way places, its circulation in the larger towns has been considerably diminished.

Lately the Government has adopted the measure of supplying the public with nickel coins, one-shai and two-shai pieces, which, although looked at askance at first, are now found very handy by the natives and circulate freely, principally in Resht, Kasvin, Teheran and Isfahan. In other cities I did not see any, nor would the natives accept mine in payment, and in villages no one would have anything to do with them as they were absolutely unknown. But wherever it has been possible to commence the circulation of these nickel coins—which were struck at the Brussels Mint and which are quite pretty—they have been accepted with great pleasure.

The old gold coins in circulation in Persia—very few and far apart—were the toman, half-toman, and two-kran piece. The gold had a legal fineness of 990. The legal weight in grains troy was: toman, 53.28; half-toman, 26.64; two-kran piece, 10.656. Weight in pure gold; toman, 51.7572; half-toman, 26.3736; two-kran piece, 10.54944.

The new coins are the two-tomans, one-toman (differentiated in 1879 and subsequent to 1879), half-toman and two-kran pieces, the gold having a legal fineness of 900. Legal weight:—

	> Two tomans.	One toman.	One toman.	
		1879.	Subsequent to 1879.	Half toman. Two kran piece.
Grains troy	100.64	50.32	44.40	22.20 8.88
Weight in pure gold	90.576	45.288	39.96	19.98 7.992

The new silver coinage consists of 2-kran pieces (five of which make a toman), one-kran, half-kran, and quarter-kran, all keeping to the legal fineness of 900 as in the older coins struck from 1857 to 1878:—

	Two krans.	One kran.	Half kran.	Quarter kran.
Legal weight (grains troy)	142.08	71.04	30.52	15.26
Weight in grains silver	127.872	63.936	27.468	13.734

The 1857 to 1878 coins were merely one-kran, half-kran, quarter-kran:—

	One kran.	Half kran.	Quarter kran.
Legal weight	76.96	38.48	19.24
Weight in pure silver	69.264	34.632	17.316

The older coinage before 1857, a most irregular coin—of one kran—varied considerably and had an approximate average fineness of 855, an average weight (grains troy) of 75.88, and a weight in pure silver of grains troy 64.877, which is below the correct standard by no less than 6.76 per cent.

In the newest coinage of two-kran pieces, the coin most used in cities,—large payments being always made in two-kran pieces—we have an average fineness of 892.166; average weight, grains troy, 119.771; weight in pure silver, grains troy, 124.69, or 2.55 per cent. below the standard.

In nickel coinage, composed of 25 per cent. of nickel and 75 per cent. of copper, we have:—

Two shai pieces (grains troy) 69.45
 One shai pieces (grains troy) 46.30

The copper coins are in great variety. There is the *abassi* (one-fifth of a kran) worth four shais, and very scarce now.

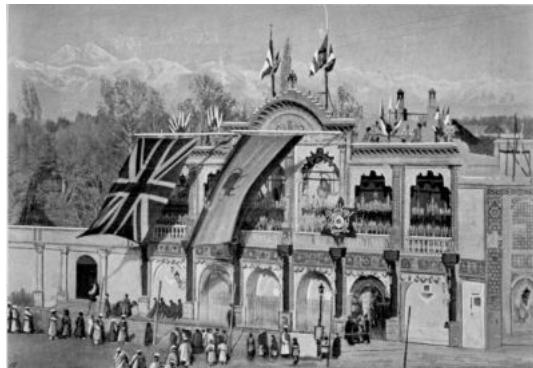
The *sadnar* (one-tenth of a kran) equivalent to two shais.

The (one) *shai* (one-twentieth of a kran).

The *pul* (one-fortieth of a kran), half a shai.

And the *jendek* (one-eightieth of a kran) a quarter shai; this coin only found in circulation in Khorassan.

When it is remembered that at the present rate of exchange the kran can be reckoned at fivepence in English money, and the toman as roughly equivalent to one American dollar, it will be seen that the subdivisions of the kran are rather minute for the average European mind.



THE IMPERIAL BANK OF PERSIA DECORATED ON THE SHAH'S BIRTHDAY.

Yet there are things that one can buy even for a *jendek*; think of it,—the fourth part of a farthing! But that is only in Khorassan.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] I understand this figure has since considerably increased.

CHAPTER XIV

The Banks of Persia—The Imperial Bank of Persia—The most revered foreigner in Persia—Loans—The road concession—The action of the Stock Exchange injurious to British interests—Securities—Brains and not capital—Risks of importing capital—An ideal banking situation—Hoarding—Defective communication—The key to profitable banking in Persia—How the exchange is affected—Coins—Free trade—The Russian Bank and Mr. De Witte—Mr. Grube an able Manager—Healthy competition—Support of the Russian Government.

THE Banks of Persia can be divided into three classes. One, containing the smaller native bankers, who often combine the jeweller's business with that of the money changer; the larger and purely native banking businesses, and then the foreign banks, such as the Imperial Bank of Persia (English Bank), the Banque d'Escompte et de Prêts (Russian Bank) and the Agency of the Banque Internationale de Commerce de Moscow (Banque Poliakoff). There are other foreign firms too, such as Ziegler and Co., Hotz, the Persian Gulf Trading Co., etc., which transact banking to a limited extent besides their usual and principal trading business; but these are not banks proper.

The Imperial Bank of Persia, being a purely British enterprise, is the most interesting to us. Its main offices are in a most impressive building in the principal square of Teheran, and it has branch offices at Tabriz, Isfahan, Meshed, Yezd, Shiraz, in the Teheran Bazaar, at Bushire and Kermanshah. It would be useless to go into the various vicissitudes through which the Bank has passed since it was first started, and the difficulties which it encountered in meeting the unusual ways of doing business of Persians and satisfying the desires of directors and shareholders in simple London town. One thing is, nevertheless, certain, and that is that if the Imperial Bank of Persia maintains the prestige now belonging to it, it owes this to Mr. Rabino, of Egyptian fame, the Manager of the Bank,—without exception the most revered foreigner in Persia.

I will not touch on the sore question of the Persian loans, eventually secured by Russia, but, curiously enough, the capital of the first loan, at least, was in great measure practically transferred from Russia to Persia by the Imperial Bank, which had the greatest stock of money in Teheran; nor shall I go into the successful and unsuccessful ventures of the Bank, such as the Road Concession, and the Mining Corporation. As to the road concession, it is beyond doubt that had the Bank not become alarmed, and had they held on a little longer, the venture might have eventually paid, and paid well. But naturally, in a slow country like Persia, nothing can be a financial success unless it is given time to develop properly.

With regard to its relation with the Banque d'Escompte et de Prêts, the Russian Bank—believed by some to be a dangerous rival—matters may to my mind be seen in two aspects. I believe that the Russian Bank, far from damaging the Imperial Bank, has really been a godsend to it, as it has relieved it by sharing advances to the Government which in time might have proved somewhat of a burden on one establishment. It is a mistake, too, to believe that in a country like Persia there is not

room for two large concerns like the two above-mentioned Banks, and that one or the other is bound to go.

The rumoured enormous successes of the Russian Bank and its really fast-increasing prestige are indisputable, but the secret of these things is well known to the local management of the Imperial Bank, which could easily follow suit and quickly surpass the Russians if more official and political support were forthcoming.

The action of the London Stock Exchange in depreciating everything Persian, for the sake of reprisal, is also injurious to the Bank, and more so to the prestige of this country, though we do not seem to see that our attitude has done much more harm to ourselves than to the Persians. It is true that Persia is a maladministered country, that there is corruption, that there is intrigue, and so forth, but is there any other country, may I ask, where to a greater or smaller extent the same accusation could not be made? Nor can we get away from the fact that although Persia has been discredited on the London market it is one of the few countries in which the national debt is extremely small and can easily be met.

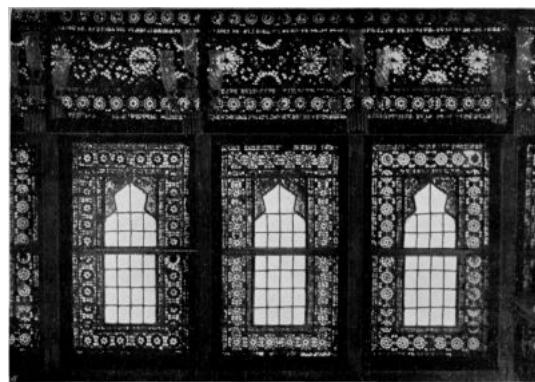
The obligations of the Imperial Government and of Muzaffer-ed-din Shah's signature, have never failed to be met, nor has the payment of full interest on mortgages contracted ever been withheld. Delays may have occurred, but everything has come right in the end. Our absurd attitude towards the Persians, when we are at the same time ready to back up enterprises that certainly do not afford one-tenth of the security to be found in Persia, is therefore rather difficult to understand.

There are few countries in which so much can be done with a comparatively small outlay as in Persia. It is not enterprises on a gigantic scale, nor millions of pounds sterling that are needed; moderate sums handled with judgment, knowledge and patient perseverance, would produce unlooked-for results. Large imported sums of capital in hard cash are not wanted and would involve considerable risk. First of all, stands the danger of the depreciation of capital by the fall in silver and the gradual rise in exchange due to the excess of imports over exports. Then comes the narrowness of the Persian markets which renders the return of large sums in cash an extremely long and difficult operation; and last but not least, the serious fact that capital is generally imported at a loss, inasmuch as the intrinsic value of the kran is much below its exchange value.

The ideal situation of an English Bank trading with the East,[2] is when its capital remains in gold, whilst its operations are conducted in silver by means of its deposits. This, because of the instability in the price of silver as compared with that of gold, and the risks which follow upon holding a metal fluctuating in value almost daily. The situation in Persia, partly owing to the constant appreciation of the Persian currency, due to the great dearth of silver produced by hoarding as well as by the export of coin to Central Asia, is quite suitable to the system of banking indicated above.

The difference between the intrinsic and the exchange value of the kran, notwithstanding the constant demand for exchange, is quite worthy of note. Political preoccupation is the principal cause of the hoarding system in Government circles, and in the masses the absence of banking organisations in which the natives have sufficient confidence to deposit their savings. Slowly but surely the Persian is beginning to feel the good effects of depositing his money in a European-managed Bank offering sound guarantees, and it is certain that in time all the money required for trade purposes will be found in Persia itself.

When better communication between the various commercial centres has been established, the distribution of the funds as required, now a matter of great difficulty and risk, will be greatly facilitated. When the despatching of sums from one city to another instead of taking minutes by telegraph or hours by post occupy, under normal circumstances, days, weeks, a month or even more, because the payments are made in solid silver which has to travel by caravan, it is easy to understand how the dangerous system of hoarding comes to be practised with impunity and facility all over Persia.



A TYPICAL PERSIAN WINDOW. (Mr. Rabino's House, Teheran.)

Of course every precaution is taken to foresee abnormal scarcity of funds, by sending specie to the places threatened, in order to help trade. During the summer months, for instance, most of the floating capital is absorbed in the provinces by the opium crop in the Yezd and Isfahan markets, when the silver krans find their way *en masse* to the villages, much to the inconvenience of the two cities. In the autumn a similar occurrence hampers trade during the export season of dried fruit and silk from Azerbaijan and Ghilan, the exchange falling very low owing to scarcity of money.

A very important item in the Bank's transactions in Persia is the constant demand for remittances of revenue to Teheran for Government purposes, such as payments for the army, officials, etc., and these remittances amount to very large sums.

The key to profitable banking in Persia is the arbitration of foreign exchanges, which being so intimately connected with internal exchange allows the latter to be worked at a profit, advantage being taken of breaks in the level of prices; but of course, with the introduction of telegraphs and in future of railways, these profits will become more and more difficult to make. In Persia the lack of quick communication still affords a fair chance of good remuneration without speculation for the important services rendered by a bank to trade.

The exchange of Persia upon London is specially affected by two influences. In the north by the value of the ruble, the more important and constant factor, Tabriz, the Persian centre of the Russian exchange, being the nearest approach in Persia to a regular market; and in the south by the rupee exchange, which differs from the ruble in its being dependent upon the price of silver.

In a country like Persia, where the exchange is not always obtainable and money at times is not to be procured, it is easy to conceive the difficulty of a bank. Forecasts of movements, based on general causes, are of little or no value in Persia. To this must be added the difficulties of examining and counting coins—weighing is not practicable owing to the irregularity of each coin—of the transmission of funds to distant places, and the general ignorance except in mercantile circles—of banking methods as we understand them.

The Imperial Bank is established in Persia, not as is believed by some persons to do business for England and English people, but to do business with everybody. "The spirit of free trade alone," said Mr. Rabino to me, "must animate the management of such a bank. Its services must be at the disposal of all; its impartiality to English, Russian, Austrian, Persian, or whatever nationality a customer may belong to, unquestioned. All must have a fair and generous treatment." The interests of the Imperial Bank are firstly those of its shareholders, secondly those of Persia which gives the Bank hospitality.

The Bank has already rendered inestimable services to Persia by diffusing sound business principles, which the Persians seem slowly but gladly to learn and accept. That the future of a bank on such true principles is bound to be crowned with success seems a certainty, but as has often been pointed out, it would be idle to fancy that a couple of years or three will remove the prejudices and peculiar ways of thinking and of transacting business of an Oriental race, whose civilisation is so different from ours, or that the natives will accept our financial system with its exactitude and punctuality, the result of ages of experience, unhesitatingly and immediately.

The Persian requires very careful handling. He is obstinate, and by mere long, tedious, passive resistance will often get the better in a bargain. By the employment of similar methods however, it is not difficult to obtain one's way in the end. A good deal of patience is required and time *ad libitum*, that is all.

There is no need for a large stock of gold and rubles, but what is mostly wanted is a greater number of men who might be sent all over the country, men with good business heads and a polite manner, and, above all, men well suited to the present requirements of the country.

The Russian, we find,—contrary to our popular ideas, which ever depict him knut in hand,—almost fraternises with the Asiatics, and in any case treats them with due consideration as if they had a right to live, at least in their own country. Hence his undoubted popularity. But we, the quintessence of Christianity and charity towards our neighbours, habitually treat natives with much needless harshness and reserve, which far from impressing the natives with our dignity—as we think—renders us ridiculous in their eyes. A number of younger Englishmen are beginning to be alive to this fact, and instruction on this point should form part of the commercial training of our youths whose lives are to be spent in the East.

The other important bank in Persia upon which great hopes are built, although worked on different lines, is the so-called Russian Bank, the *Société de Prêts de Perse*, as it was at first called when founded by Poliakoff in 1891. It was an experiment intended to discover exactly what was wanted in the country and what was the best way to attract business. The monopoly of Public Auctions was obtained in conjunction with the Mont-de-Piété—a scheme which did not work very well at first, the natives not being accustomed to sudden innovations. The concern subsequently developed into the *Bank Estekrasi* (Bank of Loans), or *Banque de Prêts de Perse*, as it styled itself, but financially it did not pay, and at one moment was expected to liquidate. It is said that it then threatened to amalgamate with the Imperial Bank. Mr. De Witte, of St. Petersburg fame, was consulted in the matter, and took exactly twenty-four hours to make up his mind on what was the best course to pursue. He bought the bank up, the State Bank of St. Petersburg making an advance on the shares. The Minister of Finance has a right to name all the officials in the bank, who, for appearance sake, are not necessarily all of Russian nationality, and the business is transacted on the same lines as at the State Bank of St. Petersburg.

A most efficient man was sent out as manager; Mr. Grube, a gentleman of much tact and most attractive manner, and like Mr. Rabino—a genius in his way at finance; a man with a thorough knowledge of the natives and their ways. In the short time he has been in Teheran the bank has made enormous strides, by mere sound, business capability and manly, straightforward enterprise.

Mr. Grube has, I think, the advantage of the manager of the Imperial Bank in the fact that, when the Russians know they have a good man at the helm, they let him steer his ship without interference. He is given absolute power to do what he thinks right, and is in no way hampered by shareholders at home. This freedom naturally gives him a very notable advantage over the Imperial Bank, which always has to wait for instructions from London.

Mr. Grube, with whom I had a long and most interesting conversation, told me how he spends his days in the bazaar branch of his bank, where he studies the ways and future possibilities of the country and its natives, and the best ways of transacting business compatible with European principles, and in particular carefully analysing the best ways of pushing Russian trade and industries in Persia. In all this he has the absolute confidence and help of his Government, and it is really marvellous how much he has been able to do to further Russian influence in Persia. There is no trickery, no intrigue, no humbug about it; but it is mere frank, open competition in which the stronger nation will come out first.

It was most gratifying to hear in what glowing terms of respect the managers of the two rival banks spoke of each other. They were fighting a financial duel, bravely, fairly, and in a most gentlemanly manner on both sides. There was not the slightest shade of false play on either side, and this I specially mention because of the absurd articles which one often sees in English papers, written by hasty or ill-informed correspondents.

Russia's trade, owing to its convenient geographical position, is bound to beat the English in Northern Persia, but it should be a good lesson to us to see, nevertheless, how the Russian Government comes forward for the protection of the trade of the country, and does everything in its power to further it. Russia will even go so far as to sell rubles at a loss to merchants in order to

encourage trade in Persia, no doubt with the certainty in sight that as trade develops the apparent temporary loss will amply be compensated in due time by big profits.

It is, to an Englishman, quite an eye-opener to watch how far the Russians will go for the absolute benefit of their own trade, and this conduct pursued openly and blamelessly can only be admired by any fair-minded person. It is only a pity that we are not yet wide awake enough to do the same.

The Russian Bank has branches in the principal cities of Northern Persia, her business being so far merely confined to the North.

FOOTNOTES:

[2] See Institute of Bankers.

CHAPTER XV

Illegitimate Bank-notes—Hampering the Bank's work—The grand fiasco of the Tobacco Corporation—Magnificent behaviour of the natives—The Mullahs and tobacco—The nation gives up smoking—Suppression of the monopoly—Compensation—Want of tact—Important European commercial houses and their work—Russian and British trade—Trade routes—The new Persian Customs—What they are represented to be and what they are—Duties—The employment of foreigners in Persia—The Maclean incident.

THE work of the Imperial Bank has at various times been hampered by speculators who tried to make money by misleading the public. Their speculations were always based on the prestige of the bank. For instance, take the Bushire Company and the Fars Trading Company, Limited, companies started by native merchants. They illegally issued bank-notes which, strangely enough, owing to the security found in the Imperial bank-notes, found no difficulty in circulating at a small discount, especially in Shiraz.

Naturally, the Imperial Bank, having in its conventions with the Persian Government the exclusive right to issue bank-notes payable at sight, protested against this infringement of rights, but for a long time got little redress, and some of the fraudulent bank-notes are to this day circulating in Southern Persia.

Sooner or later this was bound to interfere with the bank, as the natives, unaccustomed to bank-notes, confused the ones with the others. Moreover, the enemies of the bank took advantage of this confusion to instigate the people against the Imperial Bank, making them believe that the word "Imperial" on the bank-notes meant that the issuing of bank-notes was only a new scheme of the Government to supply people with worthless paper instead of a currency of sound silver cash. In the southern provinces this stupid belief spread very rapidly, and was necessarily accentuated by the issue of the illegal bank-notes of local private concerns, which, although bearing foreign names, were merely Persian undertakings.

Necessarily, the many foreign speculations to which we have already referred, cannot be said to have strengthened confidence in anything of European importation; but the grand successive abortions of the Belgian and Russian factories—which were to make gas, sugar, glass, matches, etc.—are hardly to be compared in their disastrous results to the magnificent English fiasco of the Tobacco Corporation, which not only came to grief itself, but nearly caused a revolution in the country. It is well-known how a concession was obtained by British capitalists in 1890 to establish a tobacco monopoly in Persia, which involved the usual payment of a large sum to the Shah, and presents to high officials.

The company made a start on a very grand scale in February, 1891, having the whole monopoly of purchase and sale of tobacco all over Persia. No sooner had it begun its work than a commission of injured native merchants presented a petition to the Shah to protest against it. A decree was, however, published establishing the monopoly of the corporation all over Persia, and upon this the discontent and signs of rebellion began.

Yet this affair of the tobacco monopoly showed what fine, dignified people the Persians can be if they choose. The want of tact, the absolute mismanagement and the lack of knowledge in dealing with the natives, the ridiculous notion that coercion would at once force the Persians to accept the tobacco supplied by the Corporation, fast collected a dense cloud of danger overhead. Teheran and the other larger cities were placarded with proclamations instigating the crowds to murder Europeans and do away with their work.

But the Persians, notwithstanding their threats, showed themselves patient, and confident that the Shah would restore the nation to its former happiness. In the meantime the company's agents played the devil all over the empire. It seems incredible, even in the annals of Persian history, that so little lack of judgment could have been shown towards the natives.

The Mullahs saw an excellent opportunity to undo in a few days the work of Europeans of several scores of years. "Allah," they preached to the people, "forbids you to smoke or touch the impure tobacco sold by Europeans." On a given day the Mugte hahl, or high priest of sacred Kerbalah, declared that the faithful throughout the country must touch tobacco no more; tobacco, the most cherished of Persian indulgences.

Mirza Hassan Ashtiani, *mujtahed* of Teheran, on whom the Shah relied to pacify the crowds now in flagrant rebellion, openly preached against his Sovereign and stood by the veto of his superior priest at Kerbalah. He went further and ~~exhorted~~ the people to cease smoking, not because tobacco was impure, but because the Koran says that it is unlawful to make use of any article which is not fairly dealt in by all alike.

At a given date all through the Shah's dominions—and this shows a good deal of determination—the foreigner and his tobacco were to be treated with contempt. Tobacco was given up by all. In the

bazaars, in the caravanserais, in the streets, in the houses, where under ordinary circumstances every man puffed away at a *kalian*, a *chibuk* (small pocket-pipe) or cigarette, not a single soul could be seen smoking for days and days. Only the Shah made a point of smoking in public to encourage the people, but even his wife and concubines—at the risk of incurring disfavour—refused to smoke, and smashed the *kalians* before his eyes. In house-holds where the men—ever weaker than women—could, after weeks of abstinence, not resist the temptation in secrecy, their wives destroyed the pipes.

For several weeks not a single individual touched tobacco—a most dignified protest which quite terrified the Shah and everybody, for, indeed, it was apparent that people so strong-willed were not to be trifled with.

In many places the natives broke out into rebellion, and many lives were lost. Nasr-ed-din Shah, frightened and perplexed, called the high Mullah of Teheran to the palace (January 5th-6th, 1892). By his advice the tobacco monopoly was there and then abolished by an Imperial Decree, and the privileges granted for the sale and export of tobacco revoked. Furthermore, the Mullah only undertook to pacify the people on condition that all foreign enterprises and innovations in Persia should be suppressed; that all people imprisoned during the riots should be freed, and the families of those killed fully indemnified.

The sudden end of the Tobacco Corporation necessarily led to much correspondence with the British Minister, Sir Frank Lascelles, on the question of compensation and damages to the company which, depending on its monopoly, had entered into agreements, and had already paid out large sums of money. It was finally agreed that the Shah should pay £500,000 sterling compensation, and take over the assets of the company, supposed to be some £140,000, subject to realisation.

With the assistance of the Bank of Persia, a six per cent. loan was issued, which was taken up principally by the shareholders of the Tobacco Corporation. The interest and the sinking fund of this loan were punctually met until the year 1900 when it was repaid in full on the conclusion of the Russian loan.

In England this failure seems to have been ascribed to Russian intrigue, but it must in all fairness be said that had the Russians tried a similar scheme in a similar manner, they would have fared even worse than we did. Even Persian concerns established on European principles have serious troubles to contend with; but it was madness to believe that an entire Eastern nation could, at a moment's notice, be forced to accept—in a way most offensive to them—such an article of primary use as tobacco, which, furthermore, was offered at a higher price than their own tobaccos which they liked better.

There are in Persia a few important European commercial houses, such as Ziegler and Co., and Hotz and Son, which have extensive dealings with Persians. Ziegler and Co. deal in English imports and in the exportation of carpets, etc., whereas Hotz and Son import Russian articles, which they find cheaper and of easier sale. Both are eminently respectable firms, and enjoy the esteem of everybody.

Notwithstanding the Swiss name, Ziegler and Co. is an English firm, although, as far as I know, it has not a single English employee in its various branches in Persia. The reason, as we have seen, is that foreigners are considered more capable. It has in the various cities some very able Swiss agents, who work most sensibly and excellently, and who certainly manage to make the best of whatever business there is to be done in the country. For over thirty years the house has been established in Persia, having begun its life at Tabriz and then extended to Teheran, Resht, Meshed, Isfahan, Yezd—the latter so far a non-important branch—and Shiraz, Bushire, Bandar Abbas and Bagdad, where it has correspondents working for the firm.

The house imports large quantities of Manchester goods and exports chiefly carpets, cloths, opium and dried fruit. The carpets, which are specially made for the European market, are manufactured chiefly at Sultanabad where thousands of hands are employed at the looms, scattered about in private houses of the people and not in a large factory. The firm takes special care to furnish good wool and cottons coloured with vegetable dyes, and not with aniline. Ancient patterns are selected and copied in preference to new designs. Of course, besides these, other carpets are purchased in other parts of the country. Carpets may be divided into three classes. The scarce and most expensive pure silk rugs; the *lamsavieh* or good quality carpets, and the *mujodeh* or cheaper kind. There is a good demand for the two latter qualities all over Europe and in America.

Articles specially dealt in are the cotton and wool fabrics called *ghilim*, the designs of which are most artistic; and to a certain extent other fabrics, such as the vividly coloured Kashan velvets, the watered silks of Resht, the Kerman cloths resembling those of Cashmir, the silver and gold embroidered brocades of Yezd, and the silk handkerchiefs manufactured in the various silk districts, principally Tabriz, Resht, Kashan and Yezd.

The stamped and hand-drawn *kalamkars* in stringent colours upon white cotton also find their way in large quantities to Europe, but are more quaint than beautiful. Large and ill-proportioned figures are frequently attempted in these designs. When of truly Persian manufacture the colours are said to be quite permanent under the action of both light and water.

The firm of Hotz and Son deals in well-nigh everything, and has made good headway of late years. It has large establishments at Isfahan, Shiraz and Bushire, and two agencies, one at Ahwaz on the Karun River, and one in Teheran (Groeneweg, Dunlop, and Co.); while it has correspondents in Bagdad, Busrah, Hongkong and Rotterdam, the head offices being in London. Its carpet manufacturing business in Sultanabad is now carried on by the Persian Manufacturing Co. The exports are similar to those of Ziegler and Co.

There are also smaller firms, particularly in Teheran, such as the Toko, Virion, and others who do a retail business in piece goods and articles of any kind, and are entirely in the hands of foreigners, Belgians, Austrians, and French. Without reference to statistics, which are absolutely worthless in a country like Persia, the yearly foreign trade of Persia, divided between the Gulf ports and the north and north-western and south-western frontiers, may be put down roughly at some nine or ten millions sterling.

The Russian trade in the north may be considered as about equal to the British in the south. Then there are the goods brought by the Trebizonde-Tabriz trade route from Turkey and the Mediterranean, and by the Bagdad-Kermanshah, another very important route.

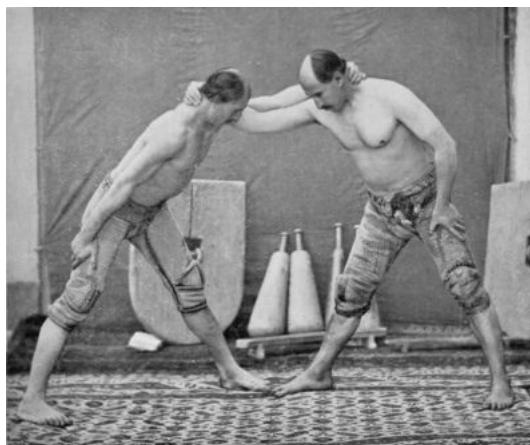
The extravagant system of farming prevailing until quite lately in Persia, as well as the uncertainties of Customs and revenue returns, makes it difficult to give trustworthy figures; but in future, probably this year, we may expect some more reliable data from the new Belgian customs office, a really sensible and well-managed administration organised by Monsieur Naus, who is, indeed, to be congratulated on the success with which his efforts at bringing about so radical a reform in the system of collecting duties have in so short a time been crowned. We often hear in England that the Customs of Persia are absolutely in the hands of Russia, and are worked by Russian officials. Even serious papers like *The Times* publish misleading statements of this kind, but nothing could be more erroneous. M. Naus, at the head of the Customs, is a Belgian, and so are nearly all the foreign employees (there are one or two French, I believe) in Persian employ, but not a single Russian is to be found among their number. That the Russians hold a comparatively trifling mortgage on the Customs as a security for their loan is true, but, as long as Persia is able to pay interest on it, Russia has no more power over the Persian Customs than we have. Under regular and honest management, like the present, the Customs have already given considerable results, and were it not for the weakness of the Government in the provinces, the Customs receipts might easily be doubled, even without a change in the tariff.

The duties levied in Persia are determined by the treaty of Turkmantchai with Russia in 1828, by which a uniform and reciprocal five per cent. for import and export was agreed to, a special convention, nevertheless, applying to Turkey, which fixed a reciprocal 12 per cent. export and 6 per cent. import duty, and 75 per cent. on tobacco and salt. An attempt was made to negotiate a new commercial treaty with Russia last year, but unfortunately, matters did not go as was expected by M. Naus, who was very keen on the subject. A high Russian official was despatched to Teheran who caused a good deal of trouble, and eventually the whole matter fell through.

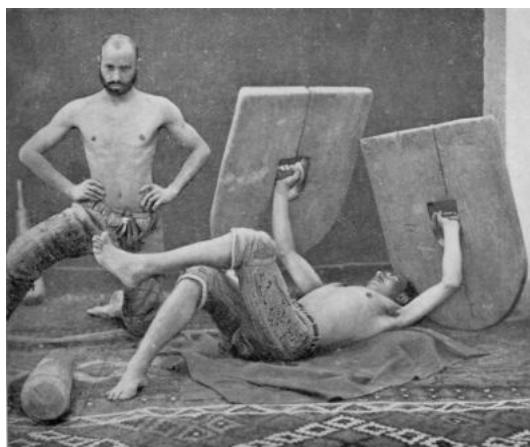
Regarding the employment of foreigners by the Persian Government, it is not out of place to recall the Maclean incident.

An agreement had been entered into with Mr. Maclean, a British subject, and a former employee of the Imperial Bank, to take charge of the Mint, in order to bring it up to date and work it on more business-like principles than at present. This led to a demand from the Russians that a similarly high office in the Shah's Government should be given to a Russian, so that this appointment might not be taken as a slight against Russia; or, if this were not possible, that two or three Russians might be employed instead in minor capacities in the new Customs. The Persian Government would not agree to this, but owing to the pressure that had been brought to bear by the Russians they felt obliged to dismiss Mr. Maclean. The British minister necessarily then stood up for British rights, and a great scandal was made of the whole affair, and as an agreement for three years had been signed, the Persian Government had to pay the salary in full for that period, although they had only availed themselves of Mr. Maclean's services for a few months.

It is to be regretted that the Sadrazam acted in so reckless a manner, for the whole matter might have been settled quietly without the slightest disturbance and unpleasantness. Anyhow, this led to a decree being passed (in 1901) that in future *no British subject, no Russian, and no Turk* will be accepted in Persian employ. This includes the army, with the exception of the special Cossack regiment which had previously been formed under Russian instructors. It can safely be said that there is not a single Russian in any civil appointment in Persia, no more than there is any Britisher; but, in the Customs service particularly, M. Naus being a Belgian, nearly all the employees are Belgian, as I have said, with only one or two French lower subordinates.



THE FIRST POSITION IN PERSIAN WRESTLING.



The Customs service is carried on with great fairness to all alike, and the mischievous stories of Russian preference and of the violation of rules in favour of Russian goods are too ridiculous to be taken into consideration. One fact is certain, that any one who takes the trouble to ascertain facts finds them very different from what they are represented to be by hasty and over-excited writers.

CHAPTER XVI

Russia on the brain—The apprehended invasion of India—Absolute nonsense—Russia's tariff—In the House of Commons—A friendly understanding advisable—German competition—The peace of the world—Russia's firm policy of bold advance—An outlet in the Persian Gulf—The policy of drift—Sound knowledge of foreign countries needed—Mutual advantages of a Russian and British agreement—Civilisation—Persia's integrity.

THERE is, unfortunately, a class of Englishmen—especially in India—who have Russia on the brain, and those people see the Russian everywhere and in everything. Every humble globe-trotter in India must be a Russian spy—even though he be an Englishman—and much is talked about a Russian invasion of India, through Tibet, through Afghanistan, Persia or Beluchistan.

To any one happening to know these countries it is almost heartrending to hear such nonsense, and worse still to see it repeated in serious papers, which reproduce and comment upon it gravely for the benefit of the public.

In explanation, and without going into many details, I will only mention the fact that it is more difficult than it sounds for armies—even for the sturdy Russian soldier—to march hundreds of miles across deserts without water for men and animals, or over a high plateau like Tibet, where (although suggested by the wise newspaper Englishman at home as a sanatorium for British troops in India) the terrific climate, great altitudes, lack of fuel, and a few other such trifles would reduce even the largest European army into a very humble one at the end of a journey across it.

Then people seem to be ignorant of the fact that, with a mountainous natural frontier like the Himahlyas, a Maxim gun or two above each of the few passable passes would bring to reason any army—allowing that it could get thus far—that intended to cross over into India!

But, besides, have we not got soldiers to defend India? Why should we fear the Russians? Are we not as good as they are? Why should we ever encourage the so far unconcerned Russian to come to India by showing our fear? It is neither manly nor has it any sense in it. The Russian has no designs whatever upon India at present—he does not even dream of advancing on India—but should India eventually fall into Russia's hands—which is not probable—believe me, it will never be by a Russian army marching into India from the north, or north-west, or west. The danger, if there is any, may be found probably very much nearer home, in our own ignorance and blindness.

We also hear much about the infamy of Russia in placing a tariff on all goods in transit for Persia, and we are told that this is another blow directed at English trade. Such is not the case. Russia, I am told by people who ought to know, would be only too glad to come to an understanding with England on some sensible basis, but she certainly is not quite so unwise as we are in letting Germany, her real enemy, swamp her market with cheap goods. The tariff is chiefly a protection against Germany. Of course, if we choose to help Germany to ruin Russia's markets as well as our own, then we must suffer in consequence, but looking ahead towards the future of Asia, it might possibly not be unwise to come to some sensible arrangement with Russia, by which her commercial interests and ours would mutually benefit instead of suffering as they do at present.

In Persia we are playing a rapidly losing game. Commercially, as I have already said, we have lost Northern Persia, and Russian influence is fast advancing in Southern Persia. This is surely the time to pull up and change our tactics, or we shall go to the wall altogether.

As Mr. Joseph Walton, M.P., very ably put it before the House of Commons on January 22nd, 1902, in the case of Russia we have at present to contend with abnormal conditions of competition. It would therefore be wise for the British Government to reconsider its policy in order to maintain, at least, our commercial interests in Southern Persia. The Government of India, too, should take its share in upholding British interests—being directly concerned in affairs that regard the welfare of Persia. Russia has gone to great expense to construct two excellent roads from the north into Persia to facilitate Russian commerce, and it would be advisable if we were to do the same from the south. (One of the roads, the Piri Bazaar—Kasvin Road, is said to have cost, including purchase of the Kasvin Teheran section, something like half a million sterling). It is indeed idle, as Mr. Walton said, to adhere to methods of the past when foreign Governments are adopting modern methods in order to achieve the commercial conquest of new regions.

The matter of establishing Consulates, too, is of the greatest importance. We find even large trading cities like Kermanshah, Yezd, Shiraz and Birjand devoid of British Consuls. Undoubtedly we should wish a priority of right to construct roads and railways in Southern Persia—in the event of the Persians failing to construct these themselves—to be recognised, and it seems quite sensible and fair to let Persia give a similar advantage to Russia in Northern Persia. Nothing but a friendly understanding between England and Russia, which should clearly define the respective spheres of influence, will save the integrity of Persia. That country should remain an independent buffer state between Russia and India. But to bring about this result it is more than necessary that we should support Persia on our side, as much as Russia does on hers, or the balance is bound to go in the latter's favour.

The understanding with Russia should also—and I firmly believe Russia would be only too anxious to acquiesce in this—provide a protection against German commercial invasion and enterprise in the region of the Persian Gulf. Germany—not Russia—is England's bitterest enemy—all the more to be dreaded because she is a "friendly enemy." It is no use to try and keep out Russia merely to let Germany reap any commercial advantages that may be got—and that is the policy England is following at the present moment. The question whether or no we have a secret agreement with

Germany, in connection with the Euphrates Valley Railway, is a serious one, because, although one cannot but admire German enterprise in that quarter, it would be well to support it only in places where it is not likely to be disastrous to our own trade and interests generally.

Little or no importance should be attached to the opinion of the Russian Press in their attacks upon England. The influential men of Russia, as well as the Emperor himself, are certainly anxious to come to a satisfactory understanding with England regarding affairs not only in Persia but in Asia generally. An understanding between the two greatest nations in the world would, as long as it lasted, certainly maintain the peace of the world, and would have enormous control over the smaller nations; whereas petty combinations can be of little practical solid assistance or use to us.

As I have pointed out before on several occasions,[3] Russia is not to-day what she was half a century ago. She has developed enough to know her strength and power, and her soldiers are probably the finest in Europe—because the most practical and physically enduring. Her steady, firm policy of bold advance, in spite of our namby-pamby, ridiculous remonstrances, can but command the admiration of any fair-minded person, although we may feel sad, very sad, that we have no men capable of standing up against it, not with mere empty, pompous words, but with actual deeds which might delay or stop her progress. As matters are proceeding now, we are only forwarding Russia's dream of possessing a port in the Persian Gulf. She wants it and she will no doubt get it. In Chapters XXXIII and XXXIV the question of the point upon which her aims are directed is gone into more fully. The undoubted fact remains that, notwithstanding our constant howling and barking, she invariably gets what she wants, and even more, which would lead one to believe that, at any rate, her fear of us is not very great.

We are told that our aggressive—by which is meant retrogressive—policy towards Russia is due to our inability to effect an entire reversal of our policy towards that country, but this is not the case at all. At any rate, as times and circumstances have changed, our policy need not be altogether reversed, but it must necessarily be subjected to modifications in order to meet changed conditions. If we stand still while Russia is going fast ahead, we are perforce left behind. The policy of drift, which we seem to favour, is bound to lead us to disaster, and when we couple with it ineffectual resistance and bigoted obstruction we cannot be surprised if, in the end, it only yields us bitter disappointment, extensive losses, enmity and derision.

The policy of drift is merely caused by our absolute ignorance of foreign countries. We drift simply because we do not know what else to do. We hear noble lords in the Government say that the reason we did not lend Persia the paltry two and a half millions sterling was because "men of business do not lend money except on proper security, and that before embarking on any such policy the Government must be anxious to see whether the security is both sufficient and suitable." Yes, certainly, but why did the Government not see? Had the Government seen they certainly would have effected the loan. Surely, well-known facts, already mentioned in previous pages, have proved very luminously our folly in taking the advice of incompetent men who judge of matters with which, to say the least, they are not familiar. But the real question appears to be, not how to make a safe and profitable financial investment, which is no part of the functions of the British or any other Government, but rather whether it is not better to lay out a certain sum for a valuable political object than to allow a formidable competitor to do so to our prejudice.

Hence the disadvantageous position in which we find ourselves at present, all over Asia, but particularly in Persia. It would no doubt be the perfection of an agreement if an amicable understanding could be arrived at with Russia, not only regarding Persia but including China, Manchuria, and Corea as well. A frank and fair adjustment of Russian and British interests in these countries could be effected without serious difficulty, mutual concessions could advantageously be granted, and mutual advice and friendly support would lead to remarkably prosperous results for both countries.

Russia, notwithstanding all we hear of her, would only be too glad to make sacrifices and concessions in order to have the friendship and support of England, and Russia's friendship to England would, I think, be of very great assistance to British manufacturers. It must be remembered that Russia is an enormous country, and that her markets both for exports and imports are not to be despised. In machinery alone huge profits could be made, as well as in cloths, piece goods, fire-arms, Manchester goods, worked iron, steel, etc.

Articles of British manufacture are in much demand in Russia and Siberia, and, should the British manufacturer see his way to make articles as required by the buyer, very large profits could be made in the Russian market. Also huge profits will eventually be made by the export of Siberian products into England and the Continent, a branch of industry which the Russians themselves are attempting to push into the British market with the assistance of their Government.

To return to Persia it must not be forgotten that British imports into that country (in 1900) amounted to £1,400,000, whilst Russia imported £21,974,952 of British goods. Which, after all, is the customer best worth cultivating: Persia which takes £1,400,000 of our goods, or Russia which buys from us for £21,974,952?

It is a mistake to believe that we are the only civilising agents of the world, and that the work of other powers in that direction only tends to the stagnation of Eastern peoples. One might affirm with more truth that our intercourse with the civilisation of the East tends to our own stagnation. We do impart to the natives, it is true, some smattering of the semi-barbaric, obsolete ways we possess ourselves, but standing aside and trying to look upon matters with the eye of a rational man, it is really difficult to say whether what we teach and how we teach it does really improve the Eastern people or not. Personally, with a long experience of natives all over Asia, it appears to me that it does not.

The Russian, though from a British point of view altogether a barbarian, does not appear to spoil the natives quite so much in his work among them. The natives under his *régime* seem happy, and his work of civilisation is more of the patriarchal style, tending more to enrich the people, to promote commerce and trade on appropriate lines, than to educate the masses according to Western methods and laws. The results are most decidedly good, and anyhow lead to much greater contentment among the masses than we can secure, for instance, in India. Above all things it makes for peace; the natives are treated with extreme consideration and kindness, but at the same time they know that no nonsense is tolerated, and that is undoubtedly the way most appreciated by Asiatics.

In Persia, it is to be hoped for the peace of all that neither Russia nor England will acquire any territorial rights, but that the integrity of the Shah's Empire may long be preserved. Only it would not be unwise to prepare for emergencies in case the country—already half spoiled by European ways—should one day collapse and make interference necessary. The integrity of states in Asia intended to serve as buffers is all very well when such states can look after themselves, but with misgovernment and want of proper reform, as in Persia, great trouble may be expected sooner than we imagine, unless we on our side are prepared to help Persia as much as Russia does on her side.

If this can be done, with little trouble to ourselves, and in a way agreeable to the Persians, there is no reason why, as an independent state, Persia should not fully develop her resources, reorganise her government and army, become a powerful nation, and establish a flourishing trade, Russia and England profiting equally by the assistance given her.

FOOTNOTES:

[3] See *China and the Allies*, Heinemann; Scribner.

CHAPTER XVII

Education—Educated but not instructed—The Mullahs—The Madrassahs—The Royal College in Teheran—Secular Schools—The brain of Persian students—Hints on commercial education for Englishmen—Languages a necessity—Observation—Foreigners and Englishmen—The Englishman as a linguist—Special commercial training in Germany—The British manufacturer—Ways and ways—Our Colonies swamped with foreign-made goods—Russia fast and firmly advancing.

To believe that the Persians are illiterate would be a mistake, and to think that the masses of Iran were properly educated would be a greater mistake still; but, if I may be allowed the expression, the average Persian cannot be better described than by saying he is "educated in ignorance"; or, in other words, the average Persian is educated, yes; but instructed, no.

If what the people are taught can be called education—and we in England should not be the first to throw stones at others—the average Persian is better educated than the average European. But there is education and education. It is difficult to find the commonest man in Persian cities who cannot read to a certain extent, and most people can also write a little and have a smattering of arithmetic.

The teaching, except in the larger and principal centres, is almost entirely in the hands of the Mullahs, so that naturally, as in our clerical schools, religion is taught before all things, verses of the Koran are learnt by heart, and the various rites and multiple religious ceremonies are pounded into the children's brains, and accessory religious sanitary duties of ablutions, etc., which are believed to purify the body and bring it nearer to Allah, are inculcated. Even in remoter villages, the boys are taught these things in the Mosques as well as a little reading, and enough writing for daily uses and how to add and subtract and multiply figures. Famous bits of national poetry and further passages from the Koran are committed to memory.



IMAN JUMEH. Head Priest of Teheran, and Official Sayer of Prayers to the Shah.

In the large cities a higher education can be obtained in the elaborate Madrassahs adjoining the mosques, and here, too, entirely at the hands of the Mullahs; but these higher colleges, a kind of university, are only frequented by the richer and better people, by those who intend to devote themselves to medicine, to jurisprudence, or to theological studies. Literature and art and science, all based mostly on the everlasting Koran, are here taught *à fond*, the students spending many years in deep and serious study. These are the old-fashioned and more common schools. But new schools in European or semi-European style also exist and, considering all things, are really excellent.

In Teheran, a Royal College has been in existence for some years. It has first-class foreign teachers, besides native instructors educated in Europe, and supplies the highest instruction to the students. Modern languages are taught to perfection, the higher mathematics, international jurisprudence, chemistry, philosophy, military strategy, and I do not know what else! I understood from some of the professors that the students were remarkable for their quickness and intelligence as compared with Europeans, and I myself, on meeting some of the students who had been and others who were being instructed in the University, was very much struck by their facility in learning matters so foreign to

them, and by their astounding faculty of retaining what they had learnt. It must be recollected that the various scientific lessons and lectures were delivered not in Persian, but in some foreign language, usually French, which intensified their difficulty of apprehending.

Other private schools have also been started on similar principles in various parts of the Empire. Even in Yezd a most excellent school on similar lines is to be found and will be described later on.

Naturally the Mullahs look askance upon these Government schools, in which foreign methods are adopted. The Alliance Française of Paris, which has a committee in Teheran, has opened a French school under the direction of Mr. Virioz, a certificated professor. The school has nearly 100 pupils, all natives. This is a primary school, of which the studies are in French, but a Mullah has been added to the staff to teach the Koran and religious subjects. In Hamadan, a large Jewish centre, the Alliance Israelite has opened important schools which have largely drained the American Presbyterian schools of their Jewish pupils. Other secular schools, it appears, are to be opened in which foreign education is to be imparted, and no doubt this is a first and most excellent step of Persia towards the improvement, if not the actual reform, of the old country.

Not that the religious education received from the priests was without its good points. The love for literature and poetry, which it principally expounded, developed in the people the more agreeable qualities which have made the Persian probably the most polite man on this earth. The clerical education, indeed, worked first upon the heart, then upon the brain; it taught reverence for one's parents, love for one's neighbours, and obedience to one's superiors; it expounded soft, charitable ways in preference to aggression or selfishness—not the right instead of the duty—as is frequently the case in secular schools.

But softness, consideration, poetry, and charity are things of the past; they can only be indulged in by barbarians; in civilisation, unluckily, there is very little use for them except for advertisement sake. So the Persians were wise to resort to our style of education, which may yet be the means of saving their country. They will lose their courtesy—they are fast beginning to do that already—their filial love, their charity, and all the other good qualities they may possess; only when these are gone will they rank in civilisation quite as high as any European nation!

The wealthier people send their sons to be educated abroad in European capitals, and one cannot help being struck by the wonderful ease with which these fellows master not only languages, but science and extremely complex subjects. Whether this is due to the brain of young Persians being fresher owing to its not having been overtaxed for generations—and therefore the impressions are clearly received and firmly recorded, or whether the mode of life is apt to develop the brain more than any other part of their anatomy is difficult to say, but the quickness and lucidity of the average young Persian brain is certainly astounding when compared to that of European brains of the same ages.

The Persian, too, has a most practical way of looking at things,—when he does take the trouble to do so—not sticking to one point of view but observing his subject from all round, as it were, with a good deal of philosophical humour that is of great help to him in all he undertakes; and it is curious to see how fast and thoroughly the younger Persians of better families can adapt themselves to European ways of thought and manner without the least embarrassment or concern. In this, I think, they surpass any other Asiatic nation, the small community of the Parsees of India alone excepted.

And here a word or two on the education of Englishmen intending to make a living abroad, especially in Asia, and particularly in Persia, will not, I hope, be out of place. With the fast-growing intercourse between East and West, sufficient stress cannot be laid upon the fact that sound commercial education on up-to-date principles is chiefly successful in countries undergoing the processes of development, and that, above all, the careful study of foreign languages—the more the better—should occupy the attention of the many students in our country who are to live in Asia. There is a great deal too much time absolutely wasted in English schools over Latin and Greek, not to mention the exaggerated importance given to games like cricket, football, tennis, which, if you like, are all very well to develop the arms and legs, but seem to have quite the reverse effect upon the brain.

Yet what is required nowadays to carry a man through the world are brains, and not muscular development of limbs. As for a classical education, it may be all right for a clergyman, a lawyer, or for a man with high but unprofitable literary tastes, but not for fellows who are not only to be useful to themselves, but indirectly to the mother country, by developing the industries or trades of lands to be opened up.

If I may be permitted to say so, one of the principal qualities which we should develop in our young men is the sense of observation in all its forms—a sense which is sadly neglected in English education. It has always been my humble experience that one learns more of use in one hour's keen observation than by reading all the books in the world, and when that sense is keenly developed it is quite extraordinary with what facility one can do things which the average unobservant man thinks utterly impossible. It most certainly teaches one to simplify everything and always to select the best and easiest way in all one undertakes, which, after all, is the way leading to success.

Again, when observation is keenly developed, languages—or, in fact, anything else—can be learnt with amazing facility. The "knack" of learning languages is only due to observation; the greatest scientific discoveries have been due to mere observation; the greatest commercial enterprises are based on the practical results of observation. But it is astounding how few people do really observe, not only carefully, but at all. The majority of folks might as well be blind for what they see for themselves. They follow like sheep what they are told to do, and make their sons and grandsons do the same; and few countries suffer more from this than England.

When travelling in the East one cannot help being struck by the difference of young Englishmen and foreigners employed in similar capacities in business places. The foreigner is usually fluent in four, five or six different languages, and has a smattering of scientific knowledge which, if not very deep, is at any rate sufficient for the purposes required. He is well up in engineering, electricity, the latest inventions, explorations, discoveries and commercial devices. He will talk sensibly on almost any subject; he is moderate in his habits and careful with his money.

Now, take the young Englishman. He seldom knows well more than one language; occasionally one finds fellows who can speak two tongues fluently; rarely one who is conversant with three or four. His conversation generally deals with drinks, the latest or coming races, the relative values of horses

and jockeys and subsequent offers to bet—in which he is most proficient. The local polo, if there is any, or tennis tournaments afford a further subject for conversation, and then the lack of discussible topics is made up by more friendly calls for drinks. The same subjects are gone through with variations time after time, and that is about all.

Now, I maintain that this should not be so, because, taking things all round, the young Englishman is really *au fond* brighter and infinitely more intelligent than foreigners. It is his education and mode of living that are at fault, not the individual himself, and this our cousins the Americans have long since discovered; hence their steaming ahead of us in every line with the greatest ease.

We hear that the Englishman is no good at learning languages, but that is again a great mistake. I do not believe that there is any other nation in Europe, after the Russians, who have greater facility—if properly cultivated—and are more capable of learning languages to perfection than the English. I am not referring to every shameless holiday tripper on the Continent who makes himself a buffoon by using misapplied, mispronounced, self-mistaught French or Italian or German sentences, but I mean the rare observant Englishman who studies languages seriously and practically.

Speaking from experience, in my travels—which extend more or less all over the world—I have ever found that Englishmen, when put to it, could learn languages perfectly. Hence my remarks, which may seem blunt but are true. Truly there is no reason why the gift of learning languages should be neglected in England,—a gift which, I think, is greatly facilitated by developing in young people musical qualities, if any, and training the ear to observe and receive sounds correctly,—a fact to which we are just beginning to wake up.

It is undoubted that the command of several languages gives a commercial man an enormous advantage in the present race of European nations in trying to obtain a commercial superiority; but the command of a language requires, too, to a limited extent the additional etiquette of ways and manners appropriate to it to make it quite efficient; and these, as well as the proper manner of speaking the language itself, can only, I repeat, be learnt by personal observation.

The Germans train commercial men specially for the East, men who visit every nook of Asiatic countries where trade is to be developed, and closely study the natives, their ways of living, their requirements, reporting in the most minute manner upon them, so that the German manufacturers may provide suitable articles for the various markets. In the specific case of Persia, Russia, the predominant country in the North, does exactly the same. The Russian manufacturer studies his client, his habits, his customs, and supplies him with what he desires and cherishes, and does not, like the British manufacturer, export to Eastern countries articles which may very well suit the farmer, the cyclist, or the cabman in England, but not the Persian agriculturist, camel-driver, or highwayman.

The everlasting argument that the British manufacturer supplies a better article borders very much on the idiotic. First of all, setting apart the doubt whether he does really supply a better article, what is certain is that a "better article" may not be of the kind that is wanted at all by the people. There are in this world climates and climates, peoples and peoples, religions and religions, houses and houses, customs and customs; and therefore the well-made English article (allowing it to be well-made) which suits English people is not always adapted for all other countries, climates, and usages.

Another prevalent mistake in this country is to believe that the Persian, or any other Oriental, will only buy cheap things. The Oriental may endeavour to strike a bargain—for that is one of the chief pleasures of his existence, though a fault which can easily be counter-balanced—but he is ever ready to pay well for what he really wants. Thus, if because of his training in fighting he requires a certain curl and a particular handle to his knife; if he fancies a particular pattern printed or woven in the fabrics he imports, and if because of his religious notions he prefers his silver spoons drilled with holes; there does not seem to be any plausible reason why his wishes should not be gratified as long as he pays for the articles supplied.

We, who own half the world, and ought to know better by this time, seem constantly to forget that our customs, and ways, seem as ridiculous to Orientals (to some of ourselves, too,) quite as ridiculous as theirs to us. In some cases, even, great offence can be caused by trying to enforce our methods too suddenly upon Eastern countries. Civilised people may prefer to blow their noses with an expensive silk handkerchief, which they carefully fold up with contents into the most prominent pocket of their coats; the unclean Oriental may prefer to close one nostril by pressing it with his finger and from the other forcibly eject extraneous matter to a distance of several feet away, by violent blowing, repeating the operation with the other nostril. This may be thought not quite graceful, but is certainly a most effective method, and possibly cleaner than ours in the end. We may fancy it good manners when in public to show little more of our shirts than the collar and cuffs, but the Persian or the Hindoo, for instance, prefers to let the garment dangle to its full extent outside so as to show its design in full. Again, we may consider it highly unbecoming and improper for ladies to show their lower limbs above the ankle; the Persian lady thinks nothing of that, but deems it shocking to show her face.

And so we could go on and on; in fact, with the Persians, one might almost go as far as saying that, with the exception of eating and drinking and a few other matters, they do most things in a contrary way to ours. They remove their shoes, when we would remove our hats; they shave their heads and let the beard grow; they sleep in the day and sit up the greater portion of the night; they make windows in the roof instead of in the walls; they inoculate smallpox instead of vaccinating to prevent it; they travel by night instead of by day.

It would be absurd to believe that we can alter in a day the customs, religions, and manners of millions of natives, and it seems almost incomprehensible that in such long colonial experience as ours we have not yet been able to grasp so simple a fact. But here, again, comes in my contention that our failing is absolute lack of observation; unless it be indeed our conceited notion that other people must rise up to our standard. Anyhow, we have lost and are losing heavily by it.

We see the Germans and Austrians swamping our own Colonies with goods wherewith our bazaars in India are overflowing; whereas English articles—if cottons are excepted—are seldom to be seen in the bazaars. This seems indeed a curious state of affairs. Nor do we need to go to India. England itself is overflowing with foreign-made goods. Now, why should it not be possible—and certainly more profitable—to meet the wishes of natives of Eastern countries and give them what they want?

There is another matter which greatly hampers the British manufacturer, in his dealings with Persians particularly. It is well to recollect that the blunt way we have of transacting business does not always answer with Orientals. Impatience, too, of which we are ever brimful, is a bad quality to possess in dealings with Persians. Times have gone by when England had practically the monopoly of the trade of the East and could lay down the law to the buyers. The influx of Europeans and the extension of trade to the most remote corners of the globe have increased to such an extent during the last few years—and with these competition—that the exporter can no longer use the slack, easy ways of half-a-century ago, when commercial supremacy was in our hands, and must look out for himself.

A knowledge of the language, with a conciliatory, courteous manner, a good stock of patience and a fair capacity for sherbet, hot tea and coffee, will, in Persia, carry a trader much further in his dealings than the so-called "smarter ways" appreciated in England or America; and another point to be remembered in countries where the natives are unbusiness-like, as they are in Persia, is that personal influence and trust—which the natives can never dissociate from the bargain in hand—go a very long way towards successful trading in Iran.

This is, to my mind, one of the principal reasons of Russian commercial successes in Northern Persia. We will not refer here to the ridiculous idea, so prevalent in England, that Russia was never and never will be a manufacturing country. Russia is very fast developing her young industries, which are pushed to the utmost by her Government, and what is more, the work is done in a remarkably practical way, by people who possess a thorough knowledge of what they are doing. The natives and the geographical features of the country have been carefully studied, and the Russian trading scheme is carried firmly and steadily on an unshakable base. We sit and express astonishment at Russian successes in Persia; the people at home can hardly be made to realise them, and I have heard people even discredit them; but this is only the beginning and nothing to what we shall see later on unless we proceed to work on similar sensible lines. It certainly arouses admiration to see what the Russians can do and how well they can do it with ridiculously small capital, when we waste, absolutely waste, immense sums and accomplish nothing, or even the reverse of what we intend to accomplish. But there again is the difference between the observant and the unobservant man.

CHAPTER XVIII

Persia's industrial, mineral and agricultural resources—Climate of various districts—Ghilan's trade—Teheran and the surrounding country—Khorassan and Sistan—The Caspian provinces—Mazanderan, Astrabad and Azerbaijan—Russian activity and concessions in Azerbaijan—Hamadan—The Malayer and Borujird districts—The nomads of Kurdistan—Naphtha—The tribes of Pusht-i-kuh—The pastoral people of Luristan—Arabistan—Farsistan—Laristan—Shiraz wines—Persian Beluchistan.

THE geographical situation of Persia, its extent, the altitude of its plateau above the sea level, its vast deserts and its mountain ranges, give the country a good selection of climates, temperatures and vegetation. We have regions of intense tropical heat and of almost arctic cold, we have temperate regions, we have healthy regions, and regions where everybody is fever-stricken. Regions with moist air, plenty of water, and big marshes, and dreary waterless deserts.

Necessarily such natural conditions are bound to give a great variety of resources which show themselves in various guises. A quick survey of the agricultural, industrial and mineral resources of the principal provinces of Persia according to up-to-date information may not be out of place, and will help the reader to appreciate the journey through some of the districts mentioned.

We have already been through Ghilan with its almost temperate climate in the lowlands, but damp in the northern portion, where fever is rampant, but where, at the same time, luxuriant vegetation with thick forests, grass in abundance, paddy fields for the extensive cultivation of rice, olive-groves, vineyards, cotton, wheat, tobacco, sugar-cane, fruit and all kinds of vegetables nourish; while the production of silk for export on a large and fast-increasing scale—it might be increased enormously if more modern methods were adopted—and wool and cotton fabrics, mostly for the Persian market, are manufactured. It exports, mostly to Russia, great quantities of dried fruit, wool, cotton, and tobacco (made into cigarettes), salt fish, caviare and oil.

South-east of Ghilan we find Teheran on a high plateau, its situation giving it a delightful and healthy climate, but very scanty agricultural resources owing to lack of water. In and near the capital city there are good gardens, grown at considerable expense and trouble, but very little other vegetation. We have seen in previous chapters what the industries of the capital, both native and foreign, are, and what they amount to; there is also a manufacture of glazed tiles, quite artistic, but not to be compared in beauty of design, colour and gloss with the ancient ones. Teheran is dependent on the neighbouring provinces and Europe for nearly everything.

This is not, however, the case with Isfahan, the ancient capital, in the province of which cotton, wheat, Indian corn, tobacco and opium are grown in fair quantities, the last-named for export. Mules and horses are reared, and there are several flourishing industries, such as carpet-making, metal work, leather tanneries, gold and silver work, and silk and wool fabrics.

To the east we have Khorassan and Sistan, a great wheat-growing country with some good pastures, and also producing opium, sugar-cane, dates and cotton. In summer the northerly winds sweeping over the desert are unbearable, and the winter is intensely cold. In the northern part of Khorassan snow falls during the coldest months, but in Sistan the winter is temperate. Life is extremely cheap for natives in Sistan, which is a favourite resort for camel men and their beasts, both from Afghanistan and Beluchistan. Northern Khorassan is the great centre of turquoise mining; copper and coal are also found there, but its local trade, now that the export of grain is forbidden, is mostly in opium, worked leather, wool and excellent horses, which can be purchased for very little money. Camels, both loading and riding (or fast-going camels) are also reared here in the southern portion of the province, the northern part being too cold for them in winter.

The handsomest and richest districts of Persia, but not the healthiest, are undoubtedly the northern ones on the Caspian Sea, or bordering on Russian territory, such as Mazanderan, Astrabad, and

Azerbaijan. In the first two, rice is grown in large quantities, castor-oil, wheat, cotton and barley; and in Mazanderan extensive pasturages are found on the hills for sheep; but not so in Astrabad, which, owing to its peculiar formation, is exposed to broiling heat on the sandy wastes, and to terrific cold on the mountains, but has a fairly temperate climate in the southern portion of the province. These—if the production of silk is excepted—are mostly agricultural districts. At one time Mazanderan had beautiful forests which are now fast being destroyed. Considerable bartering is carried on between the towns and the nomad tribes, in rugs, carpets, horses and mules, against grain, rice, felts and woollen cloths of local manufacture.

Azerbaijan, the most northern province of Persia, with Tabriz as a centre, is very rich in agricultural products, particularly in rice and wheat. Notwithstanding the severe climate in winter, when the snowfall is rather heavy, and the thermometer down to 20° below zero centigrade in February, there are good vineyards in the neighbourhood of Tabriz, and most excellent vegetables and fruit. Tobacco is successfully grown (and manufactured for the pipe and into cigarettes). The heat in summer is intense, with hot winds and dust storms; but owing to the altitude (4,420 feet at Tabriz) the nights are generally cool. In the spring there are torrential rains, and also towards the end of the autumn, but the months of May, June, October and November are quite pleasant.

The local trade of Azerbaijan is insignificant, but being on the Russian border the transit trade has of late assumed large proportions, and is increasing fast. The importation, for instance, of Turkey-reds by Russia is growing daily, and also the importation of silk, in cocoons and manufactured, velvet, woollen goods, various cotton goods, raw wool, dyes (such as henna, indigo, cochineal and others), and sugar, the principal import of all. With the exception of tea, indigo and cochineal, which come from India, the imports into Azerbaijan come almost altogether from Russia, Turkey, Austria-Hungary and France. The Russian trade in sugar is enormous from this quarter.

The carpet trade, which at one time seemed to be dying out, is now about to enter on a prosperous phase; but not so the wool-weaving, which does not go beyond the local market. Firearms are manufactured and sold to the Kurds, and jewellery is made; but the principal exports are dried fruit, raisins, almonds, pistachios, chiefly to Russia and Turkey; also gum, oils, raw metals (copper, iron), hides, precious stones, alimentary products (honey and dried vegetables), various kinds of wood, live stock (mainly sheep and oxen), tobacco, raw and manufactured, dyes, and raw and manufactured cotton and silk, carpets, rugs, and cloth.

All these exports are to Russia and Turkey, and do not all necessarily come from Azerbaijan. The Russians are displaying great activity in this province, and have established an important branch of their "Banque d'Escompte et de Prêts de Perse." They have obtained road, railway, and mining concessions, and according to the report of our consul in Tabriz, the Russian Bank makes advances, to the extent of fifty per cent., to merchants dealing in Russian goods, especially to native exporters of dried fruit, such advances being repaid in Russia by the sale of such produce, or in Persia by the sale of corresponding imports of manufactured goods.

Tabriz itself, being a centre of export of the produce of Northern Persia, is a promising field for banking enterprise, and will assume greater importance even than it has now when the carriage road scheme, a concession which was granted by the Shah, is completed, and furnishes easier communication for trade and travelling purposes. Russian engineers are said to have surveyed and mapped the country for the establishment of a railway system in Azerbaijan.

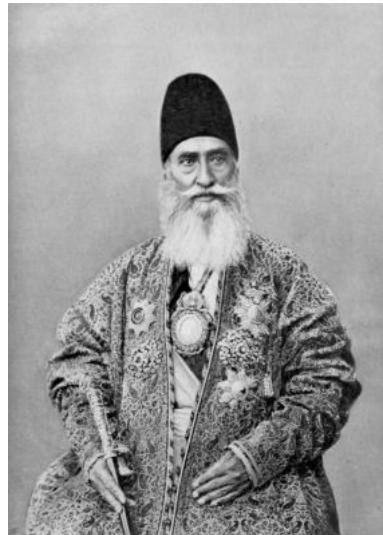
The mineral resources of Azerbaijan are said to be considerable, iron being found in rich deposits of hematite; sulphur, copper and arsenical pyrites, bitumen, lignite, salt, mineral, ferruginous and sulphurous springs, and variegated marble. A similar geological formation is found extending to Hamadan, where beds of lignite and anthracite exist, and fine marbles and granites are to be found. Here, too, we have a trifling market for local produce, but a considerable transit trade between the capital and Kermanshah, Bagdad and Tabriz.

Hamadan is mostly famous for its capital tanneries of leather and for its metal work; but its climate is probably the worst in Persia, if the suffocating Gulf coast is excepted—intensely cold in winter and spring, moist and rainy during the rest of the year. This produces good pasturages and gives excellent vegetables, wine of sorts, and a flourishing poppy culture—a speciality of the province.

The same remarks might apply to the adjoining (south) Malayer and Borujird districts, which, however, possess a more temperate climate, although liable to sudden terrific storms accompanied by torrential rains. There is a great deal of waste lands in these regions; but, where irrigated and properly cultivated, wheat flourishes, as well as fruit trees, vines, vegetables, poppies, cotton and tobacco. The people are extremely industrious, being occupied chiefly in carpet-making for foreign export, and preparing opium and dried fruit, as well as dyed cottons. Gold dust is said to be found in beds of streams and traces of copper in quartz.

Other provinces, such as Kurdistan, are inhabited by nomadic peoples, who have a small trade in horses, arms, opium, wool and dates; but the cultivation of land is necessarily much neglected except for the supply of local needs. In many parts it is almost impossible, as for five or six winter months the soil is buried in snow, and the heat of the summer is unbearable. There seem to be no intermediate seasons. The people live mostly on the caravan traffic from Bagdad to various trading centres of Persia, and they manufacture coarse cloths, rugs and earthenware of comparatively little marketable value. Naphtha does exist, as well as other bituminous springs, but it is doubtful whether the quantity is sufficient and whether the naphtha wells are accessible enough to pay for their exploitation.

That naphtha does exist, not only in Kurdistan, but in Pusht-i-kuh, Luristan, and all along the zone extending south of the Caucasus, is possible; but whether those who bore wells for oil in those regions will make fortunes similar to those made in the extraordinarily rich and exceptionally situated Baku region, is a different matter altogether, which only the future can show.



SAHIB DIVAN, who was at various periods Governor of Shiraz and Khorassan.

The tribes of Pusht-i-kuh are somewhat wild and unreliable. On the mountain sides are capital pasturages. A certain amount of grain, tobacco and fruit are grown, principally for local consumption.

In Luristan, too, we have partly a nomad pastoral population. Being a mountainous region there are extremes of temperature. In the plains the heat is terrific; but higher up the climate is temperate and conducive to good pasturages and even forests. As in the Pusht-i-kuh mountain district, here, too, wheat, rice and barley are grown successfully in huge quantities, and the vine flourishes at certain altitudes as well as fruit trees. The local commerce consists principally in live stock, the horses being quite good, and there is a brisk trade in arms and ammunition.

There remain now the large districts of Khuzistan, better known as Arabistan, Farsistan and Laristan. The heat in these provinces is terrible during the summer, and the latter district is further exposed to the Scirocco winds of the Gulf, carrying with them suffocating sand clouds. If properly developed, and if the barrage of the Karun river at Ahwaz were put in thorough repair, the plains of Arabistan could be made the richest in Persia. Wheat, rice and forage were grown in enormous quantities at one time, and cotton, tobacco, henna, indigo and sugar-cane. But this region, being of special interest to Britain, a special chapter is devoted to it, as well as to the possibilities of Farsistan and Laristan, to which future reference will be made.

The trade in Shiraz wines is fairly developed, and they are renowned all over Persia. Considering the primitive method in which they are made they are really excellent, especially when properly matured. The better ones resemble rich sherries, Madeira and port wine.

Indigo, horses, mules and carpets form the trade of the province which, they say, possesses undeveloped mineral resources such as sulphur, lead, presumed deposits of coal, mercury, antimony and nickel.

Persian Beluchistan is quite undeveloped so far, and mostly inhabited by nomad tribes, somewhat brigand-like in many parts and difficult to deal with. They manufacture rugs and saddle-bags and breed good horses and sheep. Their trade is insignificant, and a good deal of their country is barren. The climate is very hot, and in many parts most unhealthy.

CHAPTER XIX

A Persian wedding—Polygamy—Seclusion of women—Match-makers—Subterfuges
—The *Nomzad*, or official betrothal day—The wedding ceremony in the harem—For luck—The wedding procession—Festival—Sacrifices of sheep and camels—The last obstacle, the *ruhmah*—The bride's endowment—The bridegroom's settlement—Divorces—A famous well for unfaithful women—Women's influence—Division of property.

THE general European idea about Persian matrimonial affairs is about as inaccurate as is nearly every other European popular notion of Eastern customs. We hear a great deal about Harems, and we fancy that every Persian must have dozens of wives, while there are people who seriously believe that the Shah has no less than one wife for each day of the year, or 365 in all! That is all very pretty fiction, but differs considerably from real facts.

First of all, it may be well to repeat that by the Mahomedan doctrine no man can have more than four wives, and this on the specified condition that he is able to keep them in comfort, in separate houses, with separate attendants, separate personal jewellery, and that he will look upon them equally, showing no special favour to any of them which may be the cause of jealousy or envy. All these conditions make it well-nigh impossible for any man of sound judgment to embark in polygamy. Most well-to-do Persians, therefore, only have one wife.

Another important matter to be taken into consideration is, that no Persian woman of a good family will ever marry a man who is already married. So that the chances of legal polygamy become at once very small indeed in young men of the better classes, who do not wish to ruin their career by marrying below their own level.

An exception should be made with the lower and wealthy middle classes, who find a satisfaction in numbers to make up for quality, and who are the real polygamists of the country. But even in their case the real wives are never numerous—never above the number permitted by the Koran,—the

others being merely concubines, whether temporary or permanent. The Shah himself has no more than one first wife, with two or three secondary ones.

In a country where women are kept in strict seclusion as they are in Persia, the arrangement of matrimony is rather a complicated matter. Everybody knows that in Mussulman countries a girl can only be seen by her nearest relations, who by law cannot marry her, such as her father, grandfather, brothers and uncles—but not by her cousins, for weddings between cousins are very frequently arranged in Persia.

It falls upon the mother or sisters of the would-be bridegroom to pick a suitable girl for him, as a rule, among folks of their own class, and report to him in glowing terms of her charms, social and financial advantages. If he has no mother and sisters, then a complaisant old lady friend of the family undertakes to act as middlewoman. There are also women who are professional match-makers—quite a remunerative line of business, I am told. Anyhow, when the young man has been sufficiently allured into matrimonial ideas, if he has any common sense he generally wishes to see the girl before saying yes or no. This is arranged by a subterfuge.

The women of the house invite the girl to their home, and the young fellow is hidden behind a screen or a window or a wall, wherein convenient apertures have been made for him, unperceived, to have a good look at the proposed young lady. This is done several times until the boy is quite satisfied that he likes her.

The primary difficulty being settled, his relations proceed on a visit to the girl's father and mother, and ask them to favour their son with their daughter's hand.

If the young man is considered well off, well-to-do, sober and eligible in every way, consent is given. A day is arranged for the Nomzad—the official betrothal day. All the relations, friends and acquaintances of the two families are invited, and the women are entertained in the harem while the men sit outside in the handsome courts and gardens. The bridegroom's relations have brought with them presents of jewellery, according to their means and positions in life, with a number of expensive shawls, five, six, seven or more, and a mirror. Also some large trays of candied sugar.

After a great consumption of tea, sherbet, and sweets, the young man is publicly proclaimed suitable for the girl. Music and dancing (by professionals) are lavishly provided for the entertainment of guests, on a large or small scale, according to the position of the parents.

Some time elapses between this first stage of a young man's doom and the ceremony for the legal contract and actual wedding. There is no special period of time specified, and the parties can well please themselves as to the time when the nuptial union is to be finally effected.

When the day comes the parties do not go to the mosque nor the convenient registry office—Persia is not yet civilised enough for the latter—but a *Mujtched* or high priest is sent for, who brings with him a great many other Mullahs, the number in due proportion to the prospective backshish they are to receive for their services.

The wedding ceremony takes place in the bride's house, where on the appointed day bands, dancing, singing, and sweets in profusion are provided for the great number of guests invited.

The high priest eventually adjourns to the harem, where all the women have collected with the bride, the room being partitioned off with a curtain behind which the women sit. The bride and her mother (or other lady) occupy seats directly behind the curtain, while the priest with the bridegroom and his relations take places in the vacant portion of the room.

The priest in a stentorian voice calls out to the girl:—

"This young man, son of so-and-so, etc., etc., wants to be your slave. Will you accept him as your slave?"

(No reply. Trepidation on the bridegroom's part.)

The priest repeats his question in a yet more stentorian voice.

Again no reply. The women collect round the bride and try to induce her to answer. They stroke her on her back, and caress her face, but she sulks and is shy and plays with her dress, but says nothing. When the buzzing noise of the excited women-folk behind the curtain has subsided, the priest returns to his charge, while the expectant bridegroom undergoes the worst quarter of an hour of his life.

The third time of asking is generally the last, and twice the girl has already not answered. It is a terrible moment. Evidently she is not over anxious to bring about the alliance, or is the reluctance a mere feminine expedient to make it understood from the beginning that she is only conferring a great favour on the bridegroom by condescending to marry him? The latter hypothesis is correct, for when the priest thunders for the third time his former question, a faint voice—after a tantalizing delay—is heard to say "Yes."

The bridegroom, now that this cruel ordeal is over, begins to breathe again.

The priest is not yet through his work, and further asks the girl whether she said "Yes" out of her will, or was forced to say it. Then he appeals to the women near her to testify that this was so, and that the voice he heard behind the curtain was actually the girl's voice. These various important points being duly ascertained, in appropriate Arabic words the priest exclaims:

"I have married this young lady to this man and this man to this young lady."

The men present on one side of the curtain nod and (in Arabic) say they accept the arrangement. The women are overheard to say words to the same effect from the other side of the partition. Congratulations are exchanged, and more sherbet, tea and sweets consumed.

The religious ceremony is over, but not the trials of the bridegroom, now legal husband.

When sufficient time has elapsed for him to recover from his previous mental anguish, he is conveyed by his mother or women relatives into the harem. All the women are veiled and line the walls of the drawing-room, where a solitary chair or cushion on the floor is placed at the end of the room. He is requested to sit upon it, which he meekly does. A small tray is now brought in with tiny

little gold coins (silver if the people are poor) mixed with sweets. The bridegroom bends his head; and sweets and coins are poured upon his back and shoulders. Being round—the coins, not the shoulders—they run about and are scattered all over the room. All the ladies present gracefully stoop and seize one pellet of gold, which is kept for good luck; then servants are called in to collect the remainder which goes to their special benefit.

This custom is not unlike our flinging rice for luck at a married couple.

The bridegroom then returns to the men's quarters, where he receives the hearty congratulations of relatives and friends alike.

From this moment the girl becomes his wife, and the husband has the right to see her whenever he chooses, but not to cohabit with her until further ordeals have been gone through.

The husband comes to meet his wife for conversation's sake in a specially reserved room in the harem, and each time he comes he brings presents of jewellery or silks or other valuables to ingratiate himself. So that, by the time the real wedding takes place, they can get to be quite fond of one another.

There is no special limit of time for the last ceremony to be celebrated. It is merely suited to the convenience of the parties when all necessary arrangements are settled, and circumstances permit.

Usually for ten days or less before the wedding procession takes place a festival is held in the bridegroom's house, when the Mullahs, the friends, acquaintances, relations and neighbours are invited—fresh guests being entertained on each night. Music, dancing, and lavish refreshments are again provided for the guests. The men, of course, are entertained separately in the men's quarter, and the women have some fun all to themselves in the harem.

On the very last evening of the festival a grand procession is formed in order to convey the bride from her house to that of her husband. He, the husband, waits for her at his residence, where he is busy entertaining guests.

All the bridegroom's relations, with smart carriages—and, if he is in some official position, as most Persians of good families are,—with infantry and cavalry soldiers, bands and a large following of friends and servants on horseback and on foot proceed to the bride's house.

A special carriage is reserved for the bride and her mother or old lady relation, and another for the bridesmaids. She is triumphantly brought back to the bridegroom's house, her relations and friends adding to the number in the procession.

Guns are fired and fireworks let off along the road and from the bride's and bridegroom's houses. One good feature of all Persian festivities is that the poor are never forgotten. So, when the bride is driven along the streets, a great many sheep and camels are sacrificed before her carriage to bring the bride luck and to feed with their flesh the numberless people who congregate round to divide the meat of the slaughtered animals. In the house of the bridegroom, too, any number of sheep are sacrificed and distributed among the poor.

There are great rejoicings when the procession arrives at the house, where the bridegroom is anxiously awaiting to receive his spouse. As she alights from the carriage more sheep are sacrificed on the door-step—and the husband, too, is sacrificed to a certain extent, for again he has to content himself with merely conducting his bride to the harem and to leave her there. It is only late in the evening, when all the guests, stuffed with food, have departed, that the husband is led by his best man to a special room prepared for him and his wife in the harem. The bride comes in, heavily veiled, in the company of her father or some old and revered relation, who clasps the hands of husband and wife and joins them together, making a short and appropriate speech of congratulation and good wishes for a happy conjugal existence. Then very wisely retreats.

There is yet another obstacle: the removal of the long embroidered veil which hangs gracefully over the bride's head down to her knees. This difficulty is easily surmounted by another present of jewellery, known as the *ruhmuhah* or "reward for showing the face." There is no further reward needed after that, and they are at last husband and wife, not only in theory but in fact.

True, some gold coins have to be left under the furniture to appease expecting servants, and the next day fresh trials have to be endured by the bride, who has to receive her lady friends and accept their most hearty congratulations. This means more music, more professional dancing, more sweets, more sherbet, more tea. But gradually, even the festivities die out, and wife and husband can settle down to a really happy, quiet, family life, devoid of temptations and full of fellow-feeling and thoughtfulness.

Ten days before this last event takes place the wife is by custom compelled to send to the husband's house the endowment which by her contract she must supply: the whole furniture of the apartments complete from the kitchen to the drawing-room, both for the man's quarter and for her own. Besides this—which involves her in considerable expense—she, of course, further conveys with her anything of which she may be the rightful owner. Her father, if well-off, will frequently present her on her wedding-day with one or more villages or a sum in cash, and occasionally will settle on her what would go to her in the usual course of time after his death. All this—in case of divorce or litigation—remains the wife's property.

On the other hand, the bridegroom, or his parents for him, have to settle a sum of money on the bride before she consents to the marriage, and this is legally settled upon her by the Mullah in the wedding contract. She has a right to demand it whenever she pleases.

It can be seen by all this that a Persian legal marriage is not a simple matter nor a cheap undertaking. The expense and formalities connected with each wedding are enormous, so that even if people were inclined to polygamy it is really most difficult for them to carry their desire into effect. Among the nobility it has become unfashionable and is to-day considered quite immoral to have more than one wife.

Partly because the marriages are seldom the outcome of irresistible—but fast burning out—love; partly because it is difficult for a husband and almost impossible for a wife to be unfaithful, divorces in Persia are not common. Besides, on divorcing a wife, the husband has to pay her in full the settlement that has been made upon her, and this prevents many a rash attempt to get rid of one's

better-half. To kill an unfaithful wife is, in the eyes of Persians, a cheaper and less degrading way of obtaining justice against an unpardonable wrong.

One hears a good deal in Persia about a famous and extraordinarily deep well—near Shiraz, I believe—into which untrue wives were precipitated by their respective offended husbands, or by the public executioner; and also how dishonoured women are occasionally stoned to death; but these cases are not very frequent nowadays. The Persian woman is above all her husband's most intimate friend. He confides all—or nearly all—his secrets to her. She does the same, or nearly the same with him. Their interests are mutual, and the love for their own children unbounded. Each couple absolutely severed from the outside world, forbidden to get intoxicated by their religion, with no excitements to speak of, and the wife in strict seclusion—there is really no alternative left for them than to be virtuous. Women have in Persia, as in other countries, great influence over their respective husbands, and through these mediums feminine power extends very far, both in politics and commerce.

At the husband's death the property is divided among his children, each male child taking two shares to each one share for every girl's part, after one-eighth of the whole property has been paid to the deceased's widow, who is entitled to that amount by right.

Most praiseworthy union exists in most Persian families, filial love and veneration for parents being quite as strong as paternal or maternal affection. Extreme reverence for old age in any class of man is another trait to be admired in the Persian character.

CHAPTER XX

Persian women—Their anatomy—Their eyes—*Surmah*—Age of puberty—The descendants of Mohammed—Infanticide—Circumcision—Deformities and abnormalities—The ear—The teeth and dentistry—The nose—A Persian woman's indoor dress—The *yel*—The *tadji* and other jewels—Out-of-door dress—The *Chakchur*—The *ruh-band*—The *Chudder*.

PERSIA, they say, is the country of the loveliest women in the world. It probably has that reputation because few foreign male judges have ever seen them. The Persians themselves certainly would prefer them to any other women. Still, there is no doubt, from what little one sees of the Persian woman, that she often possesses very beautiful languid eyes, with a good deal of animal magnetism in them. Her skin is extremely fair—as white as that of an Italian or a French woman—with a slight yellowish tint which is attractive. They possess when young very well modelled arms and legs, the only fault to be found among the majority of them being the frequent thickness of the wrists and ankles, which rather takes away from their refinement. In the very highest classes this is not so accentuated. The women are usually of a fair height, not too small, and carry themselves fairly well, particularly the women of the lower classes who are accustomed to carry weights on their head. The better-off women walk badly, with long steps and a consequent stoop forward; whereas the poorer ones walk more firmly with a movement of the hips and with the spine well arched inwards. The neck lacks length, but is nicely rounded, and the head well set on the shoulders.

Anatomically, the body is not striking either for its beauty or its strength or suppleness. The breasts, except with girls of a very tender age, become deformed, and very pendant, and the great tendency to fatness rather interferes with the artistic beauty of their outlines.

The skeleton frame of a Persian woman is curiously constructed, the hip-bones being extremely developed and broad, whereas the shoulder blades and shoulders altogether are very narrow and undeveloped. The hands and feet are generally good, particularly the hand, which is less developed and not so coarse as the lower limbs generally and the feet in particular. The fingers are usually long and quite supple, with well-proportioned nails. The thumb is, nevertheless, hardly ever in good proportion with the rest of the hand. It generally lacks length and character. The feet bear the same characteristics as the hands except, as I have said, that they are infinitely coarser. Why this should be I cannot explain, except that intermarriage with different races and social requirements may be the cause of it.



PERSIAN WOMAN AND CHILD.



A PICTURESQUE BEGGAR GIRL.

The head I have left to the last, because it is from an artist's point of view the most picturesque part of a Persian woman's anatomy. It may possibly lack fine chiselled features and angularity; and the first impression one receives on looking at a Persian woman's face is that it wants strength and character—all the lines of the face being broad, uninterrupted curves. The nose is broad and rounded, the cheeks round, the chin round, the lips large, voluptuous and round—very seldom tightly closed; in fact, the lower lip is frequently drooping. But when it comes to eyes, eyelashes and eyebrows, there are few women in the world who can compete with the Persian. There is exuberant fire and expression in the Persian feminine organs of vision, large and almond-shaped, well-cut, and softened by eyelashes of abnormal length, both on the upper and lower lid. The powerful, gracefully-curved eyebrows extend far into the temples, where they end into a fine point, from the nose, over which they are very frequently joined. The iris of the eye is abnormally large, of very rich dark velvety brown, with jet black pupils, and the so-called "white of the eye" is of a much darker tinge than with Europeans—almost a light bluish grey. The women seem to have wonderful control over the muscles of the eyelids and brows, which render the eyes dangerously expressive. The habit of artificially blackening the under lid with *Surmah*, too, adds, to no mean extent, to the luminosity and vivid power of the eyes in contrast to the alabaster-like, really beautiful skin of the younger Persian women.

I said "younger," for owing to racial and climatic conditions the Persian female is a full-grown woman in every way at the age of ten or twelve, sometimes even younger. They generally keep in good compact condition until they are about twenty or twenty-five, when the fast expanding process begins, deforming even the most beautiful into shapeless masses of flesh and fat. They are said, however, to be capable of bearing children till the mature age of forty to forty-five, although from my own observation thirty-five to forty I should take to be the more common average at which Persian women are in full possession of prolific powers.

In the case of Sayids, the descendants of Mahammed, both sexes of whom are reputed for their extraordinary powers and vitality, women are said not to become sterile till after the age of fifty.

Whether this is a fact or not, I cannot say, but it is certain that the Sayids are a superior race altogether, more wiry and less given to orgies—drinking and smoking,—which may account for their natural powers being preserved to a later age than with most other natives of Persia. Their women are very prolific. Sayid men and women are noticeable even from a tender age for their robustness and handsome features. They are dignified and serious in their demeanour, honest and trustworthy, and are a fine race altogether.

Infanticide after birth is not very common in Persia, but abortion artificially procured has, particularly of late, become frequent for the prevention of large families that cannot be supported. This is done by primitive methods, not dissimilar to those used in European countries. Medicine is occasionally also administered internally. These cases are naturally illegal, and although the law of the country is lenient—or, rather, short-sighted—in such matters, any palpable case, if discovered, would be severely punished.

The umbilicus of newly-born children is inevitably tied by a doctor and not by a member of the family, as with some nations. Circumcision is practised on male children when at the age of forty days. It is merely performed as a sanitary precaution, and is not undergone for religion's sake.

There are few countries where deformities and abnormalities are as common as they are in Persia. In women less than in men; still, they too are afflicted with a good share of Nature's freaks. The harelip is probably the most common abnormality. Webbed and additional fingers and toes come next. Birth-marks are very common—especially very large black moles on the face and body.

Persian ears are very seldom beautiful. They are generally more or less malformed and somewhat coarse in modelling, although they seem to answer pretty well the purpose for which they are created. But although the hearing is very good in a general sense, I found that the Persian, of either sex, had great difficulty in differentiating very fine modulations of sounds, and this is probably due to the under-development or degeneration of the auricular organ, just the same as in the ears of purely Anglo-Saxon races.

To an observant eye, to my mind, there is no part of people's anatomy that shows character and refinement more plainly than the ear. Much more delicate in texture than the hands or feet, the ear is, on the other hand, less subject to misleading modifications by artificial causes which are bound to affect the other extremities.

The ear of a Persian is, in the greater percentage of cases, the ear of a degenerate. It is coarse and lumpy, and somewhat shapeless, with animal qualities strongly marked in it. Occasionally one does come across a good ear in Persia, but very rarely.

Similar remarks might apply to teeth. When young, men and women have good teeth, of fairly good shape and length, and frequently so very firmly set in their sockets as to allow their possessors to lift heavy weights with them, pulling ropes tight, etc., when the strength of the hands is not sufficient. One frequently notices, however, irregularity, or additional teeth—caused again by intermixture of race—the upper teeth not fitting properly the lower ones, and causing undue friction, early injury to the enamel, and consequent decay. This is also greatly intensified by the unhealthy state of Persian blood, especially in people inhabiting the cities, where the worst of venereal complaints has crept in a more or less virulent form into the greater part of the population. Add to this, a disorganized digestion, coloration by constant smoking, and the injury to the enamel brought on by the great consumption of sugary stuff; and if one marvels at all it is that Persian teeth are as good and serviceable as they are to a fair age.

Native Persian dentistry is not in a very advanced stage. With the exception of extraction by primitive and painful methods, nothing efficient is done to arrest the progress of decay.

The Persian nose is well shaped—but it is not perfection, mind you—and generally does not perform its duties in a creditable manner. It has nearly all the drawbacks of civilised noses. Partly owing to defective digestive organs and the escaping fumes of decayed teeth, the nose, really very well shaped in young children, generally alters its shape as they get older, and it becomes blocked up with mucous matter, causing it unduly to expand at the bridge, and giving it rather a stumpy, fat appearance. The nostrils are not very sharply and powerfully cut in most cases, and are rounded up and undecided, a sign of pliant character.

Women have better cut and healthier noses than men, as they lead a more wholesome life. In children and young people, however, very handsome noses are to be seen in Persia. The sense of odour is not very keen in either sex; in fact, it is probably the dullest of all Persian senses, which is not unfortunate for them in a country where potent smells abound. In experimenting upon healthy specimens, it was found that only comparatively strong odours could be detected by them, nor could they distinguish the difference between two different scents, when they did succeed in smelling them at all!

A Persian woman is not seen at her best when she is dressed. This sounds very shocking, but it is quite true. Of all the ugly, inartistic, clumsy, uncomfortable, tasteless, absurd female attires, that of the Persian lady ranks first.

Let us see a Persian lady indoors, and describe her various garments in the order in which they strike the observer. First of all one's eye is caught by a "bundle" of short skirts—usually of very bright colours—sticking out at the hips, and not unlike the familiar attire of our ballet girls—only shorter. These skirts are made of cotton, silk or satin, according to the lady's wealth and position.

There are various versions of how such a fashion was adopted by Persian ladies. It is of comparatively modern importation, and up to fifty or sixty years ago women wore long skirts reaching down to the ankle. The skirts gradually got shorter and shorter as the women got more civilised—so a Persian assures me—and when Nasr-ed-din Shah visited Europe and brought back to his harem the glowing accounts of the ladies' dress—or, rather, undress—at the Empire and Alhambra music-hall ballets, which seem to have much attracted him, the women of his court, in order to compete with their European rivals, and to gain afresh the favour of their sovereign, immediately adopted a similar attire. Scissors were busy, and down (or up) were the skirts reduced to a minimum length.

As in other countries, fashions in men and women are copied from the Court, and so the women from one end of Persia to the other, in the cities, took up the hideous custom. One of the principal points in the fashion is that the skirt must stick out at the sides. These skirts are occasionally very elaborate, with heavy gold braiding round them, richly embroidered, or covered all over with small pearls. The shape of the skirt is the same in all classes of women, but of course the difference lies in the material with which the dress is made.

Under the skirt appear two heavy, shapeless legs, in long foreign stockings with garters, or in tight trousers of cotton or other light material—a most unseemly sight. When only the family are present the latter garments are frequently omitted.

Perhaps the only attractive part of a woman's indoor toilet is the neat zouave jacket with sleeves, breast and back profusely embroidered in gold, or with pearls. It is called the *yel*. When lady friends are expected to call, some additions are made to the costume. A long veil fastened to the belt and supported on the projecting skirt hangs down to the feet. Sometimes it is left to drag behind. It is quite transparent, and its purposeless use none of my Persian friends could explain. "The women like it, that is all," was the only answer I could elicit, and that was certainly enough to settle the matter.

Persian women are extremely fond of jewellery, diamonds, pearls and precious stones. On the head, the hair being plastered down with a parting in the centre and knot behind on the neck, a diadem is worn by the smarter ladies, the *tadji*. Those who can afford it have a *tadji* of diamonds, the shape varying according to fashion; others display sprays of pearls. The *tadji* is a luxurious, heavy ornament only worn on grand occasions; then there is another more commonly used, the *nim tadji*, or small diadem, a lighter and handsome feathery jewel worn either in the upper centre of the forehead, or very daintily and in a most coquettish way on one side of the head, where it really looks very pretty indeed against the shiny jet black hair of the wearer.

Heavy necklaces of gold, pearls, turquoises and amber are much in vogue, and also solid and elaborate gold rings and bracelets in profusion on the fingers and wrists.

Out of doors women in the cities look very different to what they do indoors, and cannot be accused of any outward immodesty. One suspects blue or black bag-like phantoms whom one meets in the streets to be women, but there is really nothing to go by to make one sure of it, for the street costume of the Persian lady is as complete a disguise as was ever conceived.

Before going out a huge pair of loose trousers or bloomers—the *chakchur*—fastened at the waist and pulled in at the ankle, are assumed, and a *ruh-band*—a thick calico or cotton piece of cloth about a yard wide, hangs in front of the face, a small slit some three to four inches long and one and a half wide, very daintily netted with heavy embroidery, being left for ventilation's sake and as a look-out window. This is fastened by means of a hook behind the head to prevent its falling, and is held down with one hand at the lower part. Over all this the *chudder*—a black or blue piece of silk or cotton

about two yards square and matching the colour of the trousers, covers the whole from head to foot, and just leaves enough room in front for the ventilating parallelogram.

In public places this cloak is held with the spare hand quite close to the chin, so that, with the exception of a mass of black or blue clothing and a tiny bit of white embroidery over the eyes, one sees absolutely nothing of the Persian woman when she promenades about the streets. With sloping shoulders, broad hips, and huge bloomers, her silhouette is not unlike a soda-water bottle.

Her feet are socked in white or blue, and she toddles along on dainty slippers with no back to the heels. A husband himself could not recognise his wife out of doors, nor a brother his sister, unless by some special mark on her clothing, such as a spot of grease or a patch—otherwise, poor and rich, young and old, are all dressed alike. Of course the diadem and other such ornaments are only worn in the house, and the *chudder* rests directly on the head.

Yet with some good fortune one occasionally gets glimpses of women's faces, for face-screens and *chudders* and the rest of them have their ways of dropping occasionally, or being blown away by convenient winds, or falling off unexpectedly. But this is only the case with the prettier women, the ugly old ones being most particular not to disillusion and disappoint the male passers-by.

This is possibly another reason why hasty travellers have concluded that Persian women must all be beautiful.

CHAPTER XXI

The Shah's birthday—Illuminations—The Shah in his automobile—Ministers in audience—Etiquette at the Shah's Court—The Shah—A graceful speaker—The Shah's directness of speech—The Kajars and the Mullahs—The *défilé* of troops—A blaze of diamonds.

THERE are great rejoicings in Teheran and all over Persia on the Shah's birthday and the night previous to it, when grand illuminations of all the principal buildings, official residences and business concerns take place. Large sums of money are spent in decorating the buildings suitably on such an auspicious occasion, not as in our country with cheap, vari-coloured cotton rags and paper floral ornaments, but with very handsome carpets, numberless looking-glasses of all sizes and shapes, pictures in gold frames, plants and fountains. Nor are the lights used of a tawdry kind. No, they are the best candles that money can purchase, fitted in nickel-plated candlesticks with tulip globes—thousands of them—and crystal candelabras of Austrian make, or rows of paraffin lamps hired for the occasion.

It is customary in Teheran even for foreign business houses to illuminate their premises lavishly, and the Atabeg Azam or Prime Minister and other high officials go during the evening to pay calls in order to show their appreciation of the compliment to their sovereign, and admire the decorations of the leading banks and merchants' buildings.

In front of each illuminated house carpets are spread and a number of chairs are prepared for friends and guests who wish to come and admire the show. Sherbet, tea, coffee, whisky, brandy, champagne, cigarettes and all sorts of other refreshments are provided, and by the time you have gone round to inspect all the places where you have been invited, you have been refreshed to such an extent by the people, who are very jolly and hospitable, that you begin to see the illuminations go round you of their own accord.

The show that I witnessed was very interesting and really well done, the effect in the bazaar, with all the lights reflected in the mirrors, and the gold and carpets against the ancient wood-work of the caravanserais, being quite picturesque. The crowds of open-mouthed natives were, as a whole, well behaved, and quite amusing to watch. They seemed quite absorbed in studying the details of each bit of decoration. The Bank of Persia was decorated with much artistic taste. Side by side, in the wind, two enormous flags—the British and the Persian—flew on its façade.

Fireworks were let off till a late hour of the night from various parts of the town, and bands and strolling musicians played in the squares, in the bazaar, and everywhere.

The following morning the Shah came in his automobile to town from his country residence, driven, as usual, by a Frenchman. The Persian and foreign Ministers were to be received in audience early in the morning, and I was to be presented after by Sir Arthur Hardinge, our Minister at the Shah's Court.

The strict etiquette of any Court—whether European or Eastern—does remind one very forcibly of the comic opera, only it is occasionally funnier.



RUKU SULTANEH, Brother of the present Shah.

As early as 9 A.M. we left the Legation in a procession—all on horseback—the officials in their diplomatic uniforms, with plenty of gold braiding, and cocked hats; I in my own frock-coat and somebody else's tall hat, for mine had unluckily come to grief. We rode along the very dusty streets and arrived at the Palace, where we got off our horses. We entered the large court of the Alabaster Throne. There were a great many dismounted cavalry soldiers, and we were then led into a small ante-room on the first floor where all the foreign representatives of other nations in Teheran were waiting, received by a Persian high official.

We were detained here for a considerable time, and then marched through the garden to another building. By the number of pairs of shoes lining both sides of the staircase in quadruple rows, it was evident that his Majesty had many visitors. We were ushered into the Jewelled Globe Room adjoining the Shah's small reception room.

After some adjustment of clothes and collars in their correct positions, and of swords and belts, the door opened and the Ministers were let in to the Shah's presence. One peculiarity of the Shah's court is that it is etiquette to appear before the sovereign with one's hat on, and making a military salute. In former days carpet slippers were provided for the Ministers to put on over the shoes, but the custom has of late been abandoned, as it looked too ludicrous, even for a court, to see the ministers, secretaries, and attachés in their grand uniforms dragging their feet along for fear of losing a *pantoufle* on the way.

There was the usual speech of greeting and congratulation on the part of the *doyen* Minister, and presently the crowd of foreign representatives returned to the ante-room in the most approved style, walking backwards and stooping low.

My turn came next. As we entered, the Shah was standing almost in the centre of the room, with the familiar aigrette in his *kolah* (black headgear) and his chest a blaze of diamonds. He rested his right hand on a handsome jewelled sword. He looked pale and somewhat worn, but his features were decidedly handsome, without being powerful. One could plainly see depicted on his face an expression of extreme good-nature—almost too soft and thoughtful a face for a sovereign of an Eastern country. His thick underlip added a certain amount of obstinate strength to his features, which was counter-balanced by the dreamy, far-away look of his eyes heavily shadowed by prominent lids. His thick black eyebrows and huge moustache were in great contrast to the Shah's pallid face. His Majesty appeared bored, and was busy masticating a walnut when we entered, the shell of which lay in *débris* by the side of two additional entire walnuts and a nut-cracker on a small jewelled side-table.

We stood at attention with our hats on while Sir Arthur, who, as we have seen, is a linguist of great distinction, delivered to the sovereign, a most charming and graceful speech in Persian with an oriental fluency of flowery language that nearly took my breath away.

The Shah seemed highly delighted at the nice compliments paid him by our Minister, and graciously smiled in appreciation. Then Sir Arthur broke forth in French—which he speaks like a Frenchman—and with astounding grace proceeded to the presentation. The Shah was curt in his words and much to the point, and I was greatly delighted at the charming directness of his remarks. There was no figure of speech, no tawdry metaphor in the compliment paid me.

I had presented his Majesty with two of my books.

"*Vous écrivez livres?*" thundered the Shah to me in lame French, as he stroked his moustache in a nervous manner.

"*Malheureusement pour le public, oui, Majesté,*" (Unfortunately for the public, yes, your Majesty), I replied, touching my hat in military fashion.

"*Combien de livres avez vous écrits?*" (How many books have you written?)

"*Quatre, Majesté.*" (Four, your Majesty.)

"*Combien livres avez vous envoyé moi?*" (How many books have you sent me?) he roared again in his Perso adaptation of French.

"*Deux, Majesté.*" (Two, your Majesty.)

"*Envoyez encore deux autres.*" (Send the other two.) And with a nod the conversation was over, and we retreated backwards through the glass door, but not before Sir Arthur Hardinge had completed the interview with another most appropriate and graceful little speech.

The foreign Ministers departed, but I was allowed to remain in the Palace grounds to witness the various native officials and representatives paying their salaams to the Shah.

After us the foreigners in Persian employ were received in audience, and it was interesting to notice that they had adopted the Persian headgear, and some even the Persian pleated frock-coat. The Shah's reception room had a very large window overlooking the garden. The glass was raised and a throne was placed close to the edge of the window on which the Shah seated himself with a *kalian* by his side.

Then began the *défilé* of native representatives. The *Kajars* in their grand robes and white turbans paraded before the window, and then forming a semicircle salaamed the head of their family. One of them stepped forward and chanted a long poem, while the Shah puffed away at the *kalian* and stroked his luxuriant moustache. Every now and then the sovereign bowed in acknowledgment of the good wishes paid him, and his bow was repeated by the crowd below in the court. After the *Kajars* came the *Mullahs*. Again another recitation of poetry, again more bows, more *kalian* smoking. Then foreign generals stood before the window, and native officers, Court servants and eunuchs. The *défilé* of troops, colleges, merchant associations and schools came next, and was very interesting.

Persian Cossacks in their nice long white uniforms and formidable chest ornate; bandsmen with tin helmets and linoleum top boots; hussars with plenty of braiding on cotton coats and trousers; infantrymen, artillerymen, military cadets,—all were reviewed in turn by his Majesty, who displayed his royal satisfaction by an occasional bow.

There were no shrieks of enthusiasm, no applause, no hurrahs, as they went, but they all walked past the royal window in a quiet, dignified way—no easy matter, considering the extraordinary clothing that some were made to wear. One had a sort of suspicion that, not unlike the armies marching on the stage, one recognised the same contingents marching past several times to make up for numbers, but that did not take away from the picturesqueness of the scene, in the really beautiful garden, with lovely fountains sputtering and flowers in full bloom.

The procession with banners and music went on for a very long time, but at last the garden was cleared of all people. His Majesty wished to descend for a little walk.

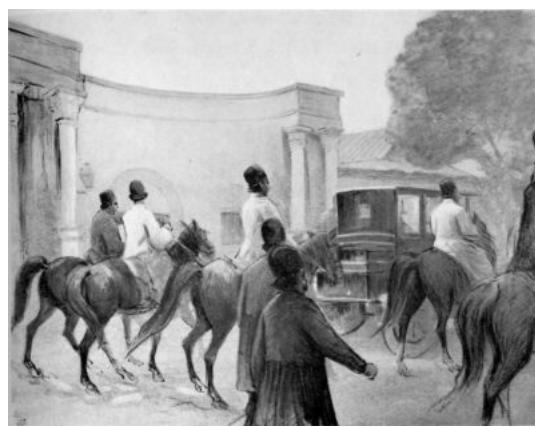
Absolutely alone, the Shah sauntered about, apparently quite relieved that the ordeal was over. The Atabeg Azam was signalled to approach, and Prime Minister and Sovereign had a friendly conversation.

Although personally not fond of jewellery, I must confess that I was much impressed by the resplendent beauty of the Shah's diamonds when a ray of sun shone upon them. His chest and the aigrette on the cap were a blaze of dazzling light, with a myriad of most beautiful flashing colours.

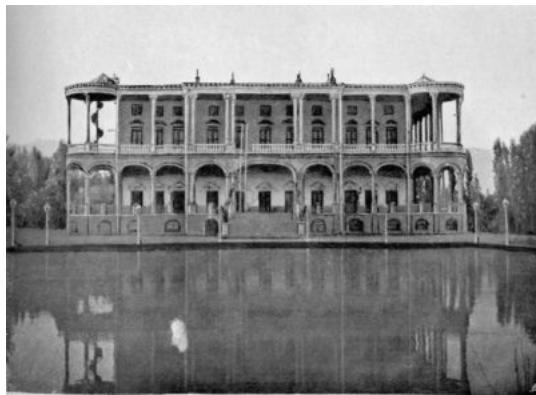
The great social excitement of the year in Teheran was the Prime Minister's evening party on the Shah's birthday, when all the higher Persian officials were invited, and nearly all the Europeans resident in Teheran, regardless of their grade or social position.

This evening party was preceded by an official dinner to the members of the Legations. Elaborate fireworks were let off in the beautiful gardens and reflected in the ponds in front of the house, and the gardens were tastefully illuminated with vari-coloured lanterns and decorated with flags.

The house itself was full of interesting objects of art, and had spacious rooms in the best European style. Persian officials, resplendent in gold-braided uniforms, their chests a mass of decorations, were politeness itself to all guests. Excellent Persian bands, playing European airs, enlivened the evening, and it was quite interesting to meet the rank and file and beauty of Teheran official and commercial life all here assembled. Persian ladies, naturally, did not appear, but a few Armenian ladies of the better classes were to be observed.



THE SHAH IN HIS AUTOMOBILE.



THE SADRAZAM'S (PRIME MINISTER'S) RESIDENCE, TEHERAN.

The gentle hint given to the guests to depart, when the Prime Minister got tired and wanted to retire, was quaintly clever. A soft music was heard to come from his bedroom. It was the signal. All hastened to make their best bows and departed.

CHAPTER XXII

The Shah's Palace—The finest court—Alabaster throne hall—A building in European style—The Museum—A chair of solid gold and silver—The *Atch*—Paintings—The banqueting room—The audience room—Beautiful carpets—An elaborate clock—Portraits of sovereigns and their places—Pianos and good music—The Jewelled-Globe room—Queen Victoria's photograph—Moving pictures—Conservatory—Roman mosaics—Toys—Adam and Eve—Royal and imperial oil paintings—A decided slight—The picture gallery—Valuable collection of arms—Strange paintings—Coins—Pearls—Printing press—Shah's country places.

ONE is told that one must not leave Teheran without carefully inspecting the Shah's Palace, its treasures and its museum. A special permit must be obtained for this through the Legation or the Foreign Office.

The first large court which I entered on this second visit has pretty tiled buildings at the sides, with its rectangular reservoir full of swans, and bordered by trees, is probably the most impressive part of the Palace. Fountains play in the centre, the spouts being cast-iron women's heads of the cheapest European kind.

The lofty throne hall stands at the end, its decorative curtains screening its otherwise unwarmed frontage. For my special benefit the curtains were raised, leaving exposed the two high spiral stone columns that support the roof in front. The bases of these columns bore conventionalized vases with sunflowers and leaf ornamentations, while the capitols were in three superposed fluted tiers, the uppermost being the largest in diameter. The frieze of the ceiling was concave, made of bits of looking-glass and gold, and the ceiling itself was also entirely composed of mirrors. The back was of shiny green and blue, with eight stars and two large looking-glasses, while at the sides there was a blue frieze.

Two large portraits of Nasr-ed-din Shah, two battle scenes and two portraits of Fath-Ali-Shah decorated the walls. The two side doors of the throne-hall were of beautifully inlaid wood, and the two doors directly behind the throne were of old Shiraz work with ivory inscriptions upon them in the centre. The lower part of the wall was of coloured alabaster, with flower ornaments and birds, principally hawks. There were also other less important pictures, two of which I was told represented Nadir and Mahmud Shah, and two unidentified.

High up in the back wall were five windows, of the usual Persian pattern, and also a cheap gold frame enclosing a large canvas that represented a half-naked figure of a woman with a number of fowls, a cat and a dog. Two gold *consoles* were the only heavy articles of movable furniture to be seen.

The spacious throne of well-marked yellow alabaster was quite gorgeous, and had two platforms, the first, with a small fountain, being reached by three steps, the second a step higher. The platform was supported by demons, "guebre" figures all round, and columns resting on the backs of feline animals. On the upper platform was spread an ancient carpet.

On leaving this hall we entered a second court giving entrance to a building in the European style, with a wide staircase leading to several reception rooms on the first floor. One—the largest—had a billiard table in the centre, expensive furniture along the walls, and curtains of glaring yellow and red plush, the chairs being of the brightest blue velvet. Taken separately each article of furniture was of the very best kind, but it seemed evident that whoever furnished that room did his utmost to select colours that would not match.

There were two Parisian desks and a fine old oak inlaid desk, a capital inlaid bureau, manufactured by a Russian in Teheran, and some Sultanabad carpets not more than fifty years old. On the shelves and wherever else a place could be found stood glass decorations of questionable artistic taste, and many a vase with stiff bunches of hideous artificial flowers.

Let us enter the adjoining Museum, a huge room in five sections, as it were, each section having a huge chandelier of white and blue Austrian glass, suspended from the ceiling. There are glass cases all round crammed full of things arranged with no regard to their value, merit, shape, size, colour or origin. Beautiful Chinese and Japanese *cloisonné* stands next to the cheapest Vienna plaster statuette representing an ugly child with huge spectacles on his nose, and the most exquisite Sèvres and other priceless ceramic ware is grouped with empty bottles and common glass restaurant decanters. In company with these will be a toy—a monkey automatically playing a fiddle.

Costly jade and cheap prints were together in another case; copies of old paintings of saints and the Virgin, coloured photographs of theatrical and music-hall stars, and of picturesque scenery, a painting of the Shah taken in his apartments, jewels, gold ornaments inlaid with precious stones, a beautiful malachite set consisting of clock, inkstand, vases, and a pair of candlesticks; meteoric stones and fossil shells—all were displayed in the utmost confusion along the shelves.

At the further end of the Museum, reached by three steps, was a gaudy throne chair of solid gold and silver enamelled. The throne had amphoras at the sides and a sunflower in diamonds behind it. The seat was of red brocade, and the chair had very small arms. It rested on a six-legged platform with two supports and two ugly candelabras.

A glance at the remaining glass cases of the museum reveals the same confusion; everything smothered in dust, everything uncared for. One's eye detects at once a valuable set of china, and some lovely axes, pistols and swords inlaid in gold, ivory and silver. Then come busts of Bismarck and Moltke, a plaster clown, tawdry painted fans and tortoiseshell ones; a set of the most common blue table-service, and two high candelabras, green and white; a leather dressing-bag with silver fittings (unused), automatic musical figures, shilling candlesticks, artificial coloured fruit in marble, and a really splendid silver dinner-service.

From the Museum we passed into the *Atch*, a kind of store-room, wherein were numberless cigar-boxes, wicker-work baskets, and badly-kept tiger skins. Here were photographs of some of the Shah's favourites, a great assortment of nut-crackers—the Persians love walnuts—cheap prints in profusion, and some good antelope-skins.

This led into the banqueting room, in the European style—and quite a good, sober style this time. The room was lighted by column candelabras, and there was a collection of the Shah's family portraits in medallions; also a large-sized phonograph, which is said to afford much amusement to His Majesty and his guests.

The paintings on the walls ran very much to the nude, and none were very remarkable, if one excepts a life-size nude figure of a woman sitting and in the act of caressing a dove. It is a very clever copy of a painting by Foragne in the Shah's picture gallery, and has been done by a Persian artist named Kamaol-el-Mulk, who, I was told, had studied in Paris.

Most interesting of all in the room, however, was the exquisite old carpet with a delightful design of roses. It was the carpet that Nasr-ed-din Shah brought to Europe with him to spread under his chair.

The dining-room bore evident signs of His Majesty's hasty departure for the country. On the tables were piled up anyhow mountains of dishes, plates, wine-glasses, and accessories, the table service made in Europe being in most excellent taste, white and gold with a small circle in which the Persian "Lion and Sun" were surmounted by the regal crown.



IN THE SHAH'S PALACE GROUNDS, TEHERAN.

We go next into the Shah's favourite apartments, where he spends most of his time when in Teheran. We are now in the small room in which I had already been received in audience by his Majesty on his birthday, a room made entirely of mirrors. There was a low and luxurious red couch on the floor, and we trod on magnificent soft silk carpets of lovely designs. One could not resist feeling with one's fingers the deliciously soft Kerman rug of a fascinating artistic green, and a charming red carpet from Sultanabad. The others came from Isfahan and Kashan. The most valuable and beautiful of all, however, was the white rug, made in Sultanabad, on which the Shah stands when receiving in audience.

Next after the carpets, a large clock by Benson with no less than thirteen different dials, which told one at a glance the year, the month, the week, the day, the moon, the hour, minutes, seconds, and anything else one might wish to know, was perhaps the most noticeable item in the Shah's room.

There was nothing in the furniture to appeal to one, the chairs and tables being of cheap bamboo of the familiar folding pattern such as are commonly characteristic of superior boarding-houses. In the way of art there was a large figure of a woman resting under a palm tree, a photographic enlargement of the Shah's portrait, and on the Shah's writing-desk two handsome portraits of the Emperor and Empress of Russia, the Emperor occupying the highest place of honour. Two smaller photographs of the Czar and Czarina were to be seen also in shilling plush frames on another writing-desk, by the side of an electric clock and night-light.

The eye was attracted by three terrestrial globes and an astronomical one with constellations standing on a table. A number of very tawdry articles were lying about on the other pieces of furniture; such were a metal dog holding a ten-shilling watch, paper frames, cheap imitation leather articles, numerous photographs of the Shah, a copy of the *Petit Journal* framed, and containing a representation of the attempt on the Shah's life, an amber service, and last, but not least, the nut-cracker and the empty nutshells, the contents of which the Shah was in process of eating when I had an audience of him some days before, still lying undisturbed upon a small desk. The Shah's special chair was embroidered in red and blue.

All this was reflected myriads of times in the diamond-shaped mirror ceiling and walls, and the effect was somewhat dazzling. The room had a partition, and on the other side was an ample couch for his Majesty to rest upon. In each reception room is to be seen a splendid grand piano, the music of which, when good, the Shah is said passionately to enjoy. One of his aides de camp—a European—is an excellent pianist and composer.

We now come to the world-renowned "Jewelled-Globe" room, and of course one makes at once for the priceless globe enclosed in a glass case in the centre of the room. The frame of the large globe is said to be of solid gold and so is the tripod stand, set in rubies and diamonds. The Globe, to do justice to its name, is covered all over with precious stones, the sea being represented by green emeralds, and the continents by rubies. The Equator line is set in diamonds and also the whole area of Persian territory.

There is nothing else of great artistic interest here, and it depressed one to find that, although the portraits in oil and photographs of the Emperors of Russia and Austria occupied prominent places of honour in the Shah's apartments, the only image of our Queen Victoria was a wretched faded cabinet photograph in a twopenny paper frame, thrown carelessly among empty envelopes and writing paper in a corner of his Majesty's writing desk. Princess Beatrice's photograph was near it, and towering above them in the most prominent place was another picture of the Emperor of Russia. We, ourselves, may attach little meaning to these trifling details, but significant are the inferences drawn by the natives themselves.

In this room, as in most of the others, there is Bohemian glass in great profusion, and a "one year chronometer" of great precision. A really beautiful inlaid ivory table is disfigured by a menagerie of coloured miniature leaden cats, lions, lizards, dogs, a children's kaleidoscope, and some badly-stuffed birds, singing automatically. On another table were more glass vases and a variety of articles made of cockle shells on pasteboard, cycle watches, and brass rings with imitation stones.

Adjoining this room is a small boudoir, possessing the latest appliances of civilisation. It contains another grand piano, a large apparatus for projecting moving pictures on a screen, and an ice-cream soda fountain with four taps, of the type one admires—but does not wish to possess—in the New York chemists' shops!! The Shah's, however, lacks three things,—the soda, the ice, and the syrups!

Less modern but more reposeful is the next ante-room with white walls and pretty wood ceiling. It has some military pictures of no great value.

On going down ten steps we find ourselves in a long conservatory with blue and yellow tiles and a semi-open roof. A channel of water runs in the centre of the floor, and is the outlet of three octagonal basins and of spouts at intervals of ten feet. There is a profusion of lemon and orange trees at the sides of the water, and the place is kept deliciously cool.

Here we emerge again into the gardens, which are really beautiful although rather overcrowded, but which have plenty of fountains and huge tanks, with handsome buildings reflected into the water.

The high tiled square towers, one of the landmarks of Teheran, are quite picturesque, but some of the pleasure of looking at the really fine view is destroyed by numerous ugly cast-iron coloured figures imported from Austria which disfigure the sides of all the reservoirs, and are quite out of keeping with the character of everything round them.

We are now conducted into another building, where Roman mosaics occupy a leading position, a large one of the Coliseum being quite a valuable work of art; but on entering the second room we are suddenly confronted by a collection of hideous tin ware and a specimen case of ordinary fish hooks, manufactured by Messrs. W. Bartlett and Sons. Next to this is a framed autograph of "Nina de Muller of St. Petersburg," and a photographic gathering of gay young ladies with suitable inscriptions—apparently some of the late Shah's acquaintances during his European tours. Here are also stuffed owls, an automatic juggler, an imitation snake, Japanese screens, and an amusing painting by a Persian artist of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden—the forbidden fruit already missing.

Previous to entering the largest room we come to an ante-room with photographs of scenery and events belonging to the Shah's tour to Europe.

In the large gold room the whole set of furniture, I am told, was presented to Nasr-ed-din Shah by the Sultan of Turkey, and there are, besides, six large oil-paintings hanging upon the walls in gorgeous gold frames. They represent the last two Shahs, the Emperor and Empress of Russia, the Crown Prince at the time of the presentation, and the Emperor of Austria. A smaller picture of Victor Emmanuel also occupies a prominent place, but here again we have another instance of the little reverence in which our beloved Queen Victoria was held in the eyes of the Persian Court. Among the various honoured foreign Emperors and Kings, to whom this room is dedicated, Queen Victoria's only representation is a small, bad photograph, skied in the least attractive part of the room—a most evident slight, when we find such photographs as that of the Emperor William occupying a front and honoured place, as does also the photograph of Queen Wilhelmina of Holland with her mother. Yet another palpable instance of this disregard for the reigning head of England appears in a series of painted heads of Sovereigns. The Shah, of course, is represented the biggest of the lot, and King Humbert, Emperor William, the Sultan of Turkey and the Emperor of Austria, of about equal sizes; whereas the Queen of England is quite small and insignificant.

The furniture in this room is covered with the richest plush.

We now come upon the royal picture gallery (or, rather, gallery of painted canvases), a long, long room, where a most interesting display of Persian, Afghan, Beluch and Turkish arms of all kinds, ancient and modern, gold bows and arrows, jewelled daggers, Damascus swords, are much more attractive than the yards of portraits of ladies who have dispensed altogether with dressmakers' bills, and the gorgeously framed advertisements of Brooks' Machine Cottons, and other products, which are hung on the line in the picture gallery! The pictures by Persian art students—who paint in European style—are rather quaint on account of the subjects chosen when they attempt to be ideal. They run a good deal to the fantastic, as in the case of the several square yards of canvas entitled the "Result of a dream." It contains quite a menagerie of most suggestive wild animals, and dozens of angels and demons in friendly intercourse playing upon the surface of a lake and among the entangled branches of trees. In the background a pyrotechnic display of great magnitude is depicted, with rockets shooting up in all directions, while ethereal, large, black-eyed women lie gracefully

reclining and unconcerned, upon most unsafe clouds. The result on the spectator of looking at the "Result of a dream," and other similar canvases by the same artist, is generally, I should think, a nightmare.

There are some good paintings by foreign artists, such as the life-size nude with a dove by Folagne, which we have already seen, most faithfully and cleverly copied by a Persian artist, in the Shah's dining-room. Then there are some pretty Dutch and Italian pictures, but nothing really first-rate in a purely artistic sense.

The cases of ancient and rare gold and silver coins are, however, indeed worthy of remark, and so are the really beautiful Persian, Afghan and Turkish gold and silver inlaid shields, and the intensely picturesque and finely ornamented matchlocks and flintlocks. Here, too, as in China, we find an abnormally large rifle—something like the *gingal* of the Celestials. These long clumsy rifles possess an ingenious back sight, with tiny perforations at different heights of the sight for the various distances on exactly the principle of a Lyman back sight.

The Persians who accompanied me through the Palace seemed very much astonished—almost concerned—at my taking so much interest in these weapons—which they said were only very old and obsolete—and so little in the hideous things which they valued and wanted me to admire. They were most anxious that I should stop before a box of pearls, a lot of them, all of good size but not very regular in shape. Anything worth big sums of money is ever much more attractive to Persians (also, one might add, to most Europeans) than are objects really artistic or even pleasing to the eye.

Next to the pearls, came dilapidated butterflies and shells and fossils and stuffed lizards and crocodiles and elephants' tusks, and I do not know what else, so that by the time one came out, after passing through the confusion that reigned everywhere, one's brain was so worn and jumpy that one was glad to sit and rest in the lovely garden and sip cup after cup of tea, which the Palace servants had been good enough to prepare.

But there was one more thing that I was dragged to see before departing—a modern printing-press complete. His Majesty, when the fancy takes him, has books translated and specially printed for his own use. With a sigh of relief I was glad to learn that I had now seen everything, quite everything, in the Shah's Palace!

The Shah has several country seats with beautiful gardens on the hills to the north of Teheran, where he spends most of the summer months, and in these residences, too, we find the rooms mostly decorated with mirrors, and differing very little in character from those in the Teheran Palace, only not quite so elaborate. European influence has frequently crept in in architectural details and interior decorations, but not always advantageously.

The Andarun or harem, the women's quarter, is generally less gaudy than the other buildings, the separate little apartments belonging to each lady being, in fact, quite modest and not always particularly clean. There is very little furniture in the bedrooms, Persian women having comparatively few requirements. There is in addition a large reception room, furnished in European style, with elaborate coloured glass windows. This room is used when the Shah visits the ladies, or when they entertain friends, but there is nothing, it may be noted, to impress one with the idea that these are regal residences or with that truly oriental, gorgeous pomp, popularly associated in Europe with the Shah's court. There is probably no court of any importance where the style of life is simpler and more modest than at the Shah's. All the houses are, nevertheless, most comfortable, and the gardens—the principal feature of all these country places—extremely handsome, with many fountains, tanks, and water channels intersecting them in every direction for the purpose of stimulating the artificially reared vegetation, and also of rendering the places cooler in summer.

Unlike most natives of the Asiatic continent, the Persian shows no reluctance in accepting foreign ways and inventions. He may lack the means to indulge in foreign luxuries, but that is a different matter altogether; the inclination to reform and adopt European ways is there all the same.

More forward in this line than most other Persians is the Shah's son, a very intelligent, bright young fellow, extremely plucky and charmingly simple-minded. He takes the keenest interest in the latest inventions and fads, and, like his father the Shah, fell a victim to the motor car mania. Only, the Shah entrusts his life to the hands of an expert French driver, whereas the young Prince finds it more amusing to drive the machine himself. This, of course, he can only do within the Palace grounds, since to do so in the streets of the town would be considered below his dignity and would shock the people.

At the country residences he is said to have a good deal of amusement out of his motor, but not so the Shah's Ministers and friends who are now terrified at the name "motor." The young Prince, it appears, on the machine being delivered from Europe insisted—with previous knowledge of how to steer it—on driving it round a large water tank. He invited several stout Ministers in all their finery to accompany him, which they did with beaming faces, overcome by the honour. The machine started full speed ahead in a somewhat snake-like fashion, and with great destruction of the minor plants on the way; then came a moment of fearful apprehension on the part of spectators and performers alike. The car collided violently with an old tree; some of the high dignitaries were flung into the water, others though still on dry land lay flat on their backs.



THE SHAH AND HIS SUITE.

It speaks volumes for the young Prince's pluck that, when the car was patched up, he insisted on driving it again; but the number of excuses and sudden complaints that have since prevailed among his father's friends when asked to go for a drive with the Prince are said to be quite unprecedented.

The Prince is a great sportsman and much beloved by all for his frankness and geniality.

CHAPTER XXIII

The selection of a servant—A Persian *diligence*—Shah-Abdul-Azim mosque—Rock carving—The round tower—Beggars—The Kerjawa—Hasanabad—Run-away horses—Misplaced affection—Characteristics of the country—Azizawad—Salt lake of Daria-i-Nimak—Aliabad—Sunsets.

I HAD much difficulty in obtaining a really first-class servant, although many applied with glowing certificates. It has always been my experience that the more glowing the certificates the worse the servant. For my particular kind of travelling, too, a special type of servant has to be got, with a constitution somewhat above the average. I generally cover very great distances at a high speed without the least inconvenience to myself, but I find that those who accompany me nearly always break down.

After inspecting a number of applicants I fixed upon one man whose features showed firmness of character and unusual determination. He was a man of few words—one of the rarest and best qualities in a travelling servant, and—he had no relations dependent upon him—the next best quality. He could shoot straight, he could stick on a saddle, he could walk. He required little sleep. He was willing to go to any country where I chose to take him. He required a high salary, but promised by all he held most sacred that he would die before he would give me the slightest trouble. This seemed all fair, and I employed him.

Only one drawback did this man have—he was an excellent European cook. I had to modify him into a good plain cook, and then he became perfection itself. His name was Sadek.

On October 2nd I was ready to start south. My foot was still in a bad condition, but I thought that the open air cure would be the best instead of lying in stuffy rooms. Riding is my favourite way of progression, but again it was necessary to submit to another extortion and travel by carriage as far as Kum on a road made by the Bank of Persia some few years ago. The speculation was not carried on sufficiently long to become a success, and the road was eventually sold to a Persian concern. The same company runs a service of carriages with relays of horses between the two places, and if one wishes to travel fast one is compelled to hire a carriage, the horses not being let out on hire for riding purposes at any of the stations.

This time I hired a large diligence—the only vehicle in the stables that seemed strong enough to stand the journey. It was painted bright yellow outside, had no windows, and was very properly divided into two compartments, one for men and one for women. The money for the journey had to be paid in advance, and the vehicle was ordered to be at the door of the hotel on Friday, October 4th, at 5.30 A.M.

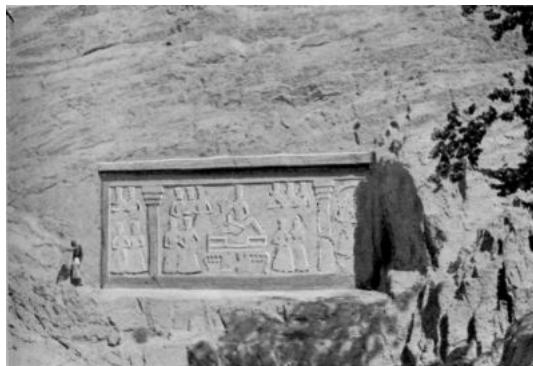
It arrived on Sunday evening, October 6th, at 6.30 o'clock. So much for Persian punctuality. Sadek said I was lucky that it did come so soon; sometimes the carriages ordered come a week later than the appointed time; occasionally they do not come at all!

Sadek, much to his disgust, was made to occupy the ladies' compartment with all the luggage, and I had the men's. We were off, and left the city just in time before the South Gate was closed. There were high hills to the south-east, much broken and rugged, and to the north beyond the town the higher ones above Golalhek, on which snow caps could be perceived. Damovend (18,600 ft.), the highest and most graceful mountain in Persia, stood with its white summit against the sky to the north-east.

Even two hundred yards away from the city gate there was nothing to tell us that we had come out of the capital of Persia—the place looks so insignificant from every side. A green-tiled dome of no impressive proportions, a minaret or two, and a few mud walls—that is all one sees of the mass of houses one leaves behind.

Barren country and dusty road, a graveyard with its prism-shaped graves half-buried in sand, are the attractions of the road. One comes to an avenue of trees. Poor trees! How baked and dried and smothered in dust! A couple of miles off, we reached a patch of verdure and some really green trees and even signs of agriculture. To our left (east) lay the narrow-gauge railway line—the only one in Persia—leading to the Shah-Abdul Azim mosque. The whole length of the railway is not more than six miles.

To the right of the road, some little distance before reaching the mosque, a very quaint, large high-relief has been sculptured on the face of a huge rock and is reflected upside down in a pond of water at its foot. Men were bathing here in long red or blue drawers, and hundreds of donkeys were conveying veiled women to this spot. An enormous tree casts its shadow over the pool of water in the forenoon.



ROCK SCULPTURE NEAR SHAH-ABDUL-AZIM.



AUTHOR'S DILIGENCE BETWEEN TEHERAN AND KUM.

It is interesting to climb up to the high-relief to examine the figures more closely. The whole sculpture is divided into three sections separated by columns, the central section being as large as the two side ones taken together. In the centre is Fath-ali-shah—legless apparently—but supposed to be seated on a throne. He wears a high cap with three aigrettes, and his moustache and beard are of abnormal length. In his belt at the pinched waist he disports a sword and dagger, while he holds a bâton in his hand. There are nine figures to his right in two rows: the Naib Sultanah, Hussein Ali, Taghi Mirza, above; below, Mahomed, Ali Mirza, Fatali Mirza, Abdullah Mirza, Bachme Mirza, one figure unidentified. To the Shah's left the figures of Ali-naghi Mirza and Veri Mirza are in the lower row; Malek Mirza, the last figure to the left, Hedar Mirza and Moh-Allah-Mirza next to Fath-Ali-Shah. All the figures are long-bearded and garbed in long gowns, with swords and daggers. On Fath-Ali-Shah's right hand is perched a hawk, and behind his throne stands an attendant with a sunshade, while under the seat are little figures of Muchul Mirza and Kameran Mirza. There are inscriptions on the three sides of the frame, but not on the base. A seat is carved in the rock by the side of the sculpture.

A few hundred yards from this well-preserved rock carving, a round tower 90 or 100 feet in height has been erected. Its diameter inside is about 40 feet and the thickness of the wall about 20 feet. It has two large yellow doors. Why this purposeless structure was put up, nobody seems to know for certain. One gets a beautiful view from the top of the wall—Teheran in the distance on one side; the Shah-Abdul-Azim mosque on the other. Mountains are close by to the east, and a patch of cultivation and a garden all round down below. Near the mosque—as is the case with all pilgrimage places in Persia—we find a bazaar crammed with beggars, black bag-like women riding astride on donkeys or mules, depraved-looking men, and stolid-looking Mullahs. There were old men, blind men, lame men, deaf men, armless men, men with enormous tumours, others minus the nose or lower jaw—the result of cancer. Millions of flies were buzzing about.

One of the most ghastly deformities I have ever seen was a tumour under a Mullah's foot. It was an almost spherical tumour, some three inches in diameter, with skin drawn tight and shining over its surface. It had patches of red on the otherwise whitish-yellow skin, and gave the impression of the man resting his foot on an unripe water-melon with the toes half dug into the tumour.

Non-Mussulmans are, of course, forbidden to enter the mosque, so I had to be content with the outside view of it—nothing very grand—and must take my reader again along the flat, uninteresting country towards Kum.

The usual troubles of semi-civilised Persia are not lacking even at the very first stage. There are no relays of horses, and those just unharnessed are too tired to proceed. They are very hungry, too, and there is nothing for them to eat. Several hours are wasted, and Sadek employs them in cooking my dinner and also in giving exhibitions of his temper to the stable people. Then follow endless discussions at the top of their voices, in which I do not take part, for I am old and wise enough not to discuss anything with anybody.

The prospects of a backshish, the entreaties and prayers being of no avail, Sadek flies into a fury, rushes to the yard, seizes the horses and harness, gives the coachman a hammering (and the post master very nearly another), and so we are able to start peacefully again at three A.M., and leave Chah-herizek behind.

But the horses are tired and hungry. They drag and stumble along in a most tiresome manner. There is moonlight, that ought to add poetry to the scenery—but in Persia there is no poetry about anything. There are a great many caravans on the road—they all travel at night to save the animals from the great heat of the day—long strings of camels with their monotonous bells, and dozens of donkeys or mules, some with the covered double litters—the *kerjawa*. These *kerjawas* are

comfortable enough for people not accustomed to ride, or for women who can sleep comfortably while in motion inside the small panier. The *kerjawa* is slung over the saddle like two large hampers with a roof of bent bands of wood. A cloth covering is made to turn the *kerjawa* into a small private room, an exact duplicate of which is slung on the opposite side of the saddle. Two persons balancing each other are required by this double arrangement, or one person on one side and an equivalent quantity of luggage on the other so as to establish a complete balance—a most important point to consider if serious accidents are to be avoided.

Every now and then the sleepy voice of a caravan man calls out "Salameleko" to my coachman, and "Salameleko" is duly answered back; otherwise we rattle along at the speed of about four miles an hour, bumping terribly on the uneven road, and the diligence creaking in a most perplexing manner.

At Hasanabad, the second stage, I was more fortunate and got four good horses in exchange for the tired ones. One of them was very fresh and positively refused to go with the others. The driver, who was brutal, used his stock-whip very freely, with the result that the horse smashed part of the harness and bolted. The other three, of course, did the same, and the coachman was not able to hold them. We travelled some few hundred yards off the road at a considerable speed and with terrible bumping, the shaky, patched-up carriage gradually beginning to crumble to pieces. The boards of the front part fell apart, owing to the violent oscillations of the roof, and the roof itself showed evident signs of an approaching collapse. We were going down a steep incline, and I cannot say that I felt particularly happy until the horses were got under control again. I feared that all my photographic plates and cameras might get damaged if the diligence turned over.

While the men mended the harness I had a look at the scenery. The formation of the country was curious. There were what at first appeared to be hundreds of small mounds like ant-hills—round topped and greyish, or in patches of light brown, with yellow sand deposits exposed to the air on the surface. On getting nearer they appeared to be long flat-topped ridges evidently formed by water-borne matter—probably at the epoch when this was the sea or lake bottom.

"*Khup es!*" (It is all right!) said the coachman, inviting me to mount again—and in a sudden outburst of exuberant affection he embraced the naughty horse and kissed him fondly on the nose. The animal reciprocated the coachman's compliment by promptly kicking the front splashboard of the carriage to smithereens.

We crossed a bridge. To the east the water-level mark, made when this valley was under water, is plainly visible on the strata of gravel with reddish mud above, of which the hills are formed.

Then, rising gradually, the diligence goes over a low pass and along a flat plateau separating the first basin we have left behind from a second, more extensive, of similar formation. The hills in this second basin appear lower. To the S.S.E. is a horseshoe-shaped sand dune, much higher than anything we had so far encountered, and beyond it a range of mountains. Salt can be seen mixed with the pale-brownish mud of the soil.

Then we drive across a third basin, large and flat, with the scattered hills getting lower and seemingly worn by the action of weather. They are not so corrugated by water-formed channels as the previous ones we had passed. Twenty feet or so below the summit of the hills a white sediment of salt showed itself plainly.

The fourth basin is at a higher level than the others—some 100 feet or so above the third—and is absolutely flat, with dark, gravelly soil.

Azizawad village has no special attraction beyond the protecting wall that encloses it—like all villages of Persia—and the domed roofs of houses to which one begins to get reconciled. Next to it is the very handsome fruit garden of Khale-es-Sultan.

At Khale Mandelha the horses are changed. The road becomes very undulating, with continuous ups and downs, and occasional steep ascents and descents. Glimpses of the large salt lake, Daria-i-Nimak, or the Masileh, as it is also called, are obtained, and eventually we had quite a pretty view with high blue mountains in the background and rocky black mounds between the spectator and the silvery sheet of water.

Aliabad has a large caravanserai with a red-columned portico to the east; also a special place for the Sadrazam, the Prime Minister, when travelling on this road; a garden with a few sickly trees, and that is all.

On leaving the caravanserai one skirts the mountain side to the west, and goes up it to the horse station situated in a most desolate spot. From this point one gets a bird's-eye view of the whole lake. Its waters, owing to evaporation, seem to withdraw, leaving a white sediment of salt along the edge. The road from the Khafe-khana runs now in a perfectly straight line S.W., and, with the exception of the first short incline, is afterwards quite flat, passing along and very little above the lake shore, from which the road is about one mile distant. The lake is to the S.E. of the road at this point. To the S.W., W., N.W., N., lies a long row of dark-brown hills which circle round the valley we are about to cross.

The sunset on that particular night was one in which an amateur painter would have revelled. A dirty-brown foreground as flat as a billiard-table—a sharp cutting edge of blue hill-tops against a bilious lemon-yellow sky blending into a ghastly cinabrese red, which gradually vanished into a sort of lead blue. There are few countries where the sun appears and disappears above and from the earth's surface with less glow than in Persia. Of course, the lack of moisture in the atmosphere largely accounts for this. During the several months I was in the country—though for all I know this may have been my misfortune only—I never saw more than half a dozen sunsets that were really worth intense admiration, and these were not in Western Persia. The usual sunsets are effects of a washed-out sort, with no force and no beautiful contrasts of lights and colours such as one sees in Egypt, in Morocco, in Spain, Italy, or even, with some amount of toning down, in our little England.

The twilight in Persia is extremely short.

CHAPTER XXIV

Severe wind—Kum, the holy city—Thousands of graves—Conservative Mullahs—Ruin and decay—Leather tanning—The gilt dome—Another extortion—Ingenious

bellows—Damovend—The scenery—Passangun—Evening prayers—A contrivance for setting charcoal alight—Putrid water—Post horses—Sin Sin—Mirage—Nassirabad—Villages near Kashan.

On a deserted road, sleepy and shaken, with the wind blowing so hard that it tore and carried away all the cotton curtains of the carriage, I arrived at Kum (3,200 feet above sea level) in the middle of the night. The distance covered between Teheran and Kum was twenty-four farsakhs, or ninety-six miles.

As we approached the holy city there appeared to be a lot of vegetation around, and Sadek and the coachman assured me that this was a region where pomegranates were grown in profusion, and the castor-oil plant, too. Cotton was, moreover, cultivated with success.

Kum is, to my mind, and apart from its holiness, one of the few really picturesque cities of Persia. I caught the first panoramic glimpse of the shrine and mosque at sunrise from the roof of the post house, and was much impressed by its grandeur. Amidst a mass of semi-spherical mud roofs, and beyond long mud walls, rise the gigantic gilded dome of the mosque, two high minarets, and two shorter ones with most beautifully coloured tiles inlaid upon their walls, the general effect of which is of most delicate greys, blues and greens. Then clusters of fruit trees, numerous little minarets all over the place, and ventilating shafts above the better buildings break the monotony agreeably.

Kum, I need hardly mention, is one of the great pilgrimages of Mahomedans. Happy dies the man or woman whose body will be laid at rest near the sacred shrine, wherein—it is said—lie the remains of Matsuma Fatima. Corpses are conveyed here from all parts of the country. Even kings and royal personages are buried in the immediate neighbourhood of the shrine. Round the city there are thousands of mud graves, which give quite a mournful appearance to the holy city. There are almost as many dead people as living ones in Kum!

Innumerable Mullahs are found here who are very conservative, and who seem to resent the presence of European visitors in the city. Access to the shrine is absolutely forbidden to foreigners.

Immense sums of money are brought daily to the holy city by credulous pilgrims, but no outward signs of a prosperous trade nor of fine streets or handsome private buildings can be detected on inspecting the bazaar or streets of the town. On the contrary, the greater part of the residences are in a hopeless state of decay, and the majority of the inhabitants, to all appearance, little above begging point.

Leather, tanned with the bark of the pomegranate, and cheap pottery are the chief industries of the holy city. On inquiring what becomes of all the wealth that comes into the town, a Persian, with a significant gesture, informed me that the Mullahs get it and with them it remains.

The handsome dome over the shrine was begun by order of Hussein Nadir Shah, but the gorgeous gilding of the copper plates was not finished till a few years ago by Nasr-ed-din Shah. A theological college also exists at this place. There is a station here of the Indo-European Telegraphs, with an Armenian in charge of it.

Much to my disgust, I was informed that the owner of the post-house had the monopoly of the traffic on the track for six or seven farsakhs more, and so travellers were compelled to submit to a further extortion by having to hire another wheeled conveyance instead of being able to ride. This time I chartered a victoria, and off we went as usual at a gallop.

Two horses had to be sent ahead while the carriage was driven with only two animals through the narrow streets of the bazaar, covered over with awnings or with domed perforated roofs. The place had a tawdry, miserable appearance, the leather shops being the only interesting ones, with the many elaborate saddles, harness, saddle-bags, and horses' ornamental displays on nails along the walls.

I saw in a blacksmith's shop an ingenious device to create a perpetual draught with bellows. The big bellows were double and allowed sufficient room to let two boys stand between the two. The boys clinging to handles in the upper part of the bellows and using the weight of their bodies now to the right, then to the left, inflated first one then the other, the wind of each bellow passing through a common end tube and each being in turn refilled with air while the other was blowing. This human pendulum arrangement was carried on with incredible rapidity by the two boys, who dashed their bodies from one side to the other and back, keeping steady time and holding their feet stationary, but describing an almost complete semicircle with the remainder of the body, the whole length of the boy forming the radius.

There was a shop or two where glass was being blown, and numerous fruit-shops with mountains of pomegranates, water-melons and grapes. At the entrance of the mosques crowds of people stood waiting for admission, some praying outside.

Once out of the town the extra two horses, which were waiting at the gate, were harnessed, and as we sped along, the lungs rejoiced in the pure air of which the stuffy, cellar-like bazaar had afforded none.

Behind, in the far distance, Damovend Mountain, covered with snow, could still be seen rising high above everything. It was undoubtedly a good-looking mountain. To the south-west and west lay indented hills of the most curious shapes and colours—one, particularly, like a roof, with a greenish base surmounted by a raw-sienna top; a twin-sister hill further west presented the same peculiarities. In the distant mountains to the west the same characteristics were apparent, the greenish stratum below extending all along and increasing in depth towards the south.

The road—if one may call it so—was extremely bad and hardly fit for wheeled traffic. After leaving Kum the vegetation ceased, and it was only at Langherut village that a patch of green refreshed the eye.

A few strolling wayfarers crowded round when the carriage stopped to give the horses a rest under the shade of a tree, and Sadek was cross-examined about the Sahib whom he was accompanying. It was quite amusing to hear one's self and one's doings commented upon in the most open manner, regardless of one's personal feelings, which are better discarded altogether while travelling in Persia. There is absolutely nothing private in the land of Iran. One's appearance, one's clothes, the quantity

of food one eats, the amount of money one carries, where one comes from and where one goes, whom one knows, one's servants, one's rifles, one's cameras,—everything is remarked upon, as if one were not present. If one possesses no false pride and a sense of humour, a deal of entertainment is thus provided on the road.

Passangun could be perceived in the distance, and a dreary, desolate place it was when one got there. In the way of architecture, we found a large tumbling-down caravanserai, a tea-shop, and the Chappar Khana (the post-house). As to vegetation, thirteen sickly trees, all counted. Barren, uninteresting country surrounded the halting place.

I spent here a pleasant hour while waiting for my luggage to arrive on pack animals. A caravan of some fifty horses and mules had halted at sunset, and a number of pilgrims, with beards dyed bright-red, were making their evening salaams towards Mecca. Having removed shoes and duly washed their feet and hands, they stood erect on the projecting platform of the caravanserai, and after considerable adjusting of caps and head-scratching, assumed a meditative attitude, head bent forward, and muttered prayers with hands down. Then the hands were raised flat before the face, with a bow. Kneeling followed, with hands first resting on the knees, then raised again to cover the face, after which, with the palms of the hands resting flat on the ground, the head was brought down until it touched the ground too. A standing position was further assumed, when the temples were touched with the thumb while prayers were recited, and then the petitioners stooped low and fell a second time on their knees, saying the beads of their rosaries. The forehead was made to touch the ground several times before the evening prayers were over.

Next, food was cooked in the small fire places of the caravanserai, and tea brewed in large quantities. The inevitable kalian was called for, and the caravanserai boy brought out his interesting little arrangement to set charcoal quickly alight for the large cup of the kalian. To a string three feet long, hung a small perforated iron cup, which he filled with charcoal, one tiny bit being already alight. By quickly revolving the contrivance as one would a sling, the draught forced through the apertures in the cup produced quick combustion, and charcoal was at once distributed alight among the kilians of the impatient guests.

Much amusement and excitement was caused among the pilgrims by a fight between a puppy-dog and five or six small goats. Only one of these at a time fought the dog, while the others occupied a high point of vantage on which they had hastily climbed, and from that place of security displayed a keen interest in the fight.

The water at Passangun was extremely bad. There were two tanks of rain water drained from the hillside along a dirty channel filled with animal refuse. The wells were below the ground level, and were walled and domed over to prevent too rapid an evaporation by the sun's rays. The water was pestilential. It had a nasty green look about it, and patches of putrid matter decomposing visibly on its surface. The stench from it when stirred was sickening. Yet the natives drank it and found it all right! There is no accounting for people's taste, not even in Persia.

At last, from this point, the positive torture of driving in carriages was over, and *Chappar* horses were to be obtained. The saddles were got ready, and with five horses we made a start that same evening for Sin Sin. After the wretched bumping and thumping and being thrown about in the wheeled conveyance on the badly-kept road, it seemed heavenly to be ambling along at a fairly good pace, even on these poor, half-starved animals, which could not in all honesty be considered to afford perfect riding. Indeed, if there ever was a society for the prevention of cruelty to animals, it should have begun its work along the Persian postal roads. The poor brutes—one can hardly call them horses—are bony and starved, with sore backs, chests and legs, with a bleeding tongue almost cut in two and pitifully swollen by cruelly-shaped bits, and endowed with stinking digestive organs and other nauseous odours of uncared-for sores heated by the friction of never-removed, clumsy, heavy pads under the saddles. It requires a pretty strong stomach, I can tell you, to ride them at all. Yet the poor devils canter along, when they do not amble, and occasionally gallop clumsily on their unsteady, skeleton-like legs. So that, notwithstanding everything, one generally manages to go at the rate of six or seven miles an hour.

If the horses at the various post-stations have just returned from conveying the post-bags, an extra sorry time is in store for the traveller. The poor animals are then so tired that they occasionally collapse on the road. I invariably used all the kindness I could to these wretches, but it was necessary for me to get on, as I intended to proceed in the greatest haste over the better known parts of Persia.

It is important to see the horses fed before starting from all the post-houses, but on many occasions no food whatever could be procured for them, when, of course, they had to go without it.

Changing horses about every 20 to 28 miles, and being on the saddle from fourteen to twenty hours out of the twenty-four, I was able to cover long distances, and kept up an average of from 80 to 120 miles daily. One can, of course, cover much greater distances than these in one day, if one is fortunate enough to get good and fresh horses at the various stations, and if one does not have to keep it up for a long period of time as I had to do.

From Sin Sin we go due south along a flat trail of salt and mud. We have a barrier of mountains to the south-west and higher mountains to the south. To the south-east also a low ridge with another higher behind it. To the north we leave behind low hills.

Sin Sin itself is renowned for its water-melons, and I, too, can humbly certify to their excellence. I took a load of them away for the journey.

From here we began to see the wonderful effects of deceitful mirage, extremely common all over Persia. One sees beautiful lakes of silvery water, with clusters of trees and islands and rocks duly reflected upside down in their steady waters, but it is all an optical deception, caused by the action of the heated soil on the expanding air immediately in contact with it, which, seen from above and at a distance, is of a bluish white tint with exactly the appearance and the mirror-like qualities of still water.

Although in Central Persia one sees many of these effects every day, they are sometimes so marvellous that even the most experienced would be deceived.

The country is barren and desolate. Kasimabad has but two buildings, both caravanserais; but Nassirabad, further on, is quite a large village, with domed roofs and a couple of minarets. On the

road is a large caravanserai, with the usual alcoves all round its massive walls. Except the nice avenue of trees along a refreshing brook of limpid water, there was nothing to detain us here but the collision between one of my pack-horses and a mule of a passing caravan, with disastrous results to both animals' loads. But, with the assistance of one or two natives commandeered by Sadek, the luggage scattered upon the road was replaced high on the saddles, the fastening ropes were pulled tight by Sadek with his teeth and hands, while I took this opportunity to sit on the roadside to partake of my lunch—four boiled eggs, a cold roast chicken, Persian bread, some cake, and half a water-melon, the whole washed down with a long drink of clear water. Riding at the rate I did, the whole day and the greater part of the night, in the hot sun and the cold winds at night, gave one a healthy appetite.

As we got nearer Kashan city, the villages got more numerous; Aliabad and the Yaze (mosque) and Nushabad to my left (east), with its blue tiled roof of the mosque. But the villages were so very much alike and uninteresting in colour and in architecture, that a description of each would be unimportant and most tedious, so that I will only limit myself to describing the more typical and striking ones with special features that may interest the reader.

In the morning of October 9th I had reached the city of Kashan, seventeen farsakhs (sixty-eight miles) from Kum, and forty-one farsakhs or 164 miles from Teheran, in two days and a half including halts.

CHAPTER XXV

Kashan—Silk manufactories—Indo-European Telegraph—The Zein-ed-din tower—The Meh-rab shrine—The Madrassah Shah—The Panja Shah—The hand of Nazareth Abbas—The Fin Palace—Hot springs—The tragic end of an honest Prime Minister—Ice store-houses—Cultivation—in the bazaar—Brass work—Silk—The Mullahs and places of worship—Wretched post-horses—The Gyabradab caravanserai—An imposing dam—Fruit-tree groves—Picturesque Kohruth village.

KASHAN, 3,260 feet above sea level, is famous for its gigantic and poisonous scorpions, for its unbearable heat, its capital silk works, and its copper utensils, which, if not always ornamental, are proclaimed everlasting. The silk manufactories are said to number over three hundred, including some that make silk carpets, of world-wide renown. The population is 75,000 souls or thereabouts. Nothing is ever certain in Persia. There are no hotels in the city, and it is considered undignified for Europeans to go to a caravanserai—of which there are some three dozen in Kashan—or to the Chappar Khana.

The Indo-European Telegraphs have a large two-storied building outside the north gate of the city, in charge of an Armenian clerk, where, through the courtesy of the Director of Telegraphs, travellers are allowed to put up, and where the guests' room is nice and clean, with a useful bedstead, washstand, and a chair or two.

A capital view of Kashan is obtained from the roof of the Telegraph building. A wide road, the one by which I had arrived, continues to the north-east entrance of the bazaar. The town itself is divided into two sections—the city proper, surrounded by a high wall, and the suburbs outside. To the south-west, in the town proper, rises the slender tower of Zein-ed-din, slightly over 100 feet high, and not unlike a factory chimney. Further away in the distance—outside the city—the mosque of Taj-ed-din with its blue pointed roof, adjoins the famous Meh-rab shrine, from which all the most ancient and beautiful tiles have been stolen or sold by avid Mullahs for export to Europe.

Then we see the two domes of the mosque and theological college, the Madrassah Shah, where young future Mullahs are educated. To the west of the observer from our high point of vantage, and north-west of the town, lies another mosque, the Panja Shah, in which the hand of one of the prophets, Nazareth Abbas, is buried. A life-size hand and portion of the forearm, most beautifully carved in marble, is shown to devotees in a receptacle in the east wall of the mosque. The actual grave in which the real hand lies is covered with magnificent ancient tiles.

It is with a certain amount of sadness that one gazes on the old Fin Palace, up on the hills some six miles to the west, and listens to the pathetic and repellent tragedy which took place within its garden walls.

The square garden is surrounded by a high wall, and has buildings on three sides. Marble canals, fed by large marble tanks, in which run streams of limpid water, intersect the garden in the middle of a wide avenue of dark cypresses. The garden was commenced by Shah Abbas. The Palace, however, was built by Fath-Ali-Shah, who also much improved the gardens and made this a favourite residence during the hot summer months.

There is here a very hot natural spring of sulphur water, and copper, which is said to possess remarkable curative qualities, especially for rheumatism and diseases of the blood. One bath is provided for men and another for women.

The Palace, with its quaint pictures and decorations is now in a state of abandonment and semi-collapse. The tragic end (in 1863 or 1864, I could not clearly ascertain which) at this place of Mirza-Taki Khan, then Prime Minister of Persia—as honest and straightforward a politician as Persia has ever possessed—adds a peculiar gloom to the place.

A man of humble birth, but of great genius, Mirza-Taki Khan, rose to occupy, next to the Shah, the highest political position in his country, and attempted to place the Government of Persia on a firm basis, and to eradicate intrigue and corruption. To this day his popularity is proverbial among the lower classes, by whom he is still revered and respected for his uprightness. The Shah gave him his only sister in marriage, but unhappily one fine day his enemies gained the upper hand at Court. He fell into disgrace, and was banished to Kashan to the Fin Palace. Executioners were immediately sent to murder him by order of the Shah. Mirza-Taki Khan, when their arrival was announced, understood that his end had come. He asked leave to commit suicide instead, which he did by having the arteries of his arms cut open. He bled to death while in his bath.

Royal regret at the irreparable loss was expressed, but it was too late. The body of the cleverest statesman Persia had produced was conveyed for burial to the Sanctuary of Karbala.

One cannot help being struck, in a stifling hot place like Kashan, to find large ice store-houses. Yet plenty of ice is to be got here during the winter, especially from the mountains close at hand. These ice-houses have a pit dug in the ground to a considerable depth, and are covered over with a high conical roof of mud. To the north-east, outside the city, in the suburbs a great many of these ice store-houses are to be seen, as well as a small, blue-tiled roof of a mosque, the pilgrimage of Habbib-Mussah.

There is some cultivation round about Kashan, principally of cotton, tobacco, melons and water-melons, which one sees in large patches wherever there is water obtainable.

Kashan is protected by mountains to the south and west, and by low hills to the north-west, but to the north and north-east the eye roams uninterrupted over an open, flat, dusty, dreary plain of a light brown colour until it meets the sky line on the horizon, softly dimmed by a thick veil of disturbed sand. Due east lie the Siah Kuh (mountains), then comes another gap in the horizon to the south-east.

In the dark and gloomy bazaar the din of hundreds of wooden hammers on as many pieces of copper being made into jugs, trays, pots or pans, is simply deafening, echoed as it is under the vaulted roofs, the sound waves clashing in such an unmusical and confused way as to be absolutely diabolical. A few of these copper vessels are gracefully ornamented and inlaid, but the majority are coarse in their manufacture. They are exported all over the country. The manufactured silk, the other important product of Kashan, finds its way principally to Russia.

The inhabitants are most industrious and, like all industrious people, are extremely docile, amenable to reason, and easy to manage. The Mullahs are said to have much power over the population, and, in fact, we find in Kashan no less than 18 mosques with five times that number of shrines, counting large and small.

I experienced some difficulty in obtaining relays of fresh post horses, the mail having been despatched both north and south the previous night, and therefore no horses were in the station. At seven in the evening I was informed that five horses had returned and were at my disposal. Twenty minutes later the loads were on their saddles, and I was on the road again.

After travelling under the pitch-dark vaulted bazaars (where, as it was impossible to see where one was going, the horses had to be led), and threading our way out of the suburbs, we travelled on the flat for some time before coming to the hilly portion of the road where it winds its way up at quite a perceptible gradient. We had no end of small accidents and trouble. The horses were half-dead with fatigue. They had gone 48 miles already with the post, and without rest or food had been sent on with me for 28 more miles! The poor wretches collapsed time after time on the road under their loads, although these were very light, and my servant and I and the chappar boy had to walk the whole way and drag the animals behind us, for they had not sufficient strength to carry us. Even then their knees gave way every now and then, and it was no easy job to get them to stand up again. One of them never did. He died, and, naturally, we had to abandon him.

It came on to blow very hard, and with the horses collapsing on all sides and the loads getting constantly undone owing to the repeated falls of the animals, we could not cover more than one mile, or two, an hour. Caravans generally take the road over these mountains during the day, so that now the road was quite deserted and we could get no assistance from any one. The loss of one horse increased our difficulty, as it involved putting more weight on the other horses.

At 3.30 A.M. we managed to reach the caravanserai in the mountains at Gyabrabat (Gabarbat), the sight of which was enough to settle all the horses. They one and all threw themselves down on reaching the door, and it was not possible to make them stand again. To continue the journey to Kohrut (Kohrud) through the night, as I had intended, was absolutely out of the question, so we roused the keeper of the hostelry and demanded admission.

The man was extremely uncivil, as he said he had some grievance against a previous English traveller, but on being assured that I would pay with my own hands for all I got and not through servants—a rule which I always follow, and which saves much unpleasantness and unfair criticism from the natives—he provided me with all I required. First of all I fed the horses. Then Sadek cooked me a capital supper. Then I gave the horses and myself some four hours rest—that refreshed us all very much.

The caravanserai was filthy. All the small rooms and alcoves were occupied, and I preferred to sleep out in the yard, sheltered from the wind behind the huge doorway. I had with me some boxes of my own invention and manufacture, which had accompanied me on several previous journeys, and which, besides a number of other purposes, can serve as a bedstead. They came in very usefully on that particular occasion.

From Gyabrabad to Kohrut the region is supposed to be a famous haunt of robbers. Undoubtedly the country lends itself to that kind of enterprise, being mountainous and much broken up, so that the occupation can be carried on with practical impunity. The road is among rocks and boulders. Although there are no very great elevations in the mountains on either side, the scenery is picturesque, with black-looking rocky slopes, at the bottom of which a tiny and beautifully limpid stream descends towards Kashan. The track is mostly along this stream.



THE TRACK ALONG THE KOHRUT DAM.



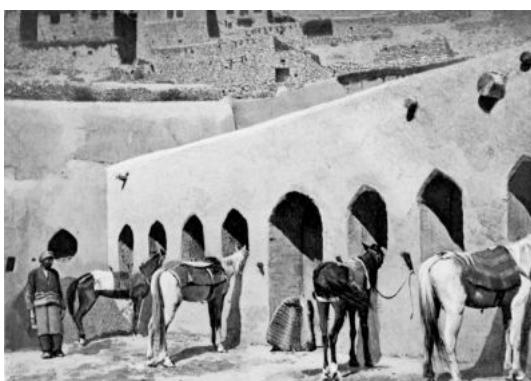
BETWEEN GYABRABAD AND KOHRUT.

After a steep, stony incline of some length, half-way between Gyabrabad and the Kohrut pass, one comes across a high and well-made dam, the work of a speculator. In winter and during the rains the water of the stream is shut up here into a large reservoir, a high wall being built across the two mountain slopes, and forming a large lake. The water is then sold to the city of Kashan. If in due course of time the purchase-money is not forthcoming, the supply is cut off altogether by blocking up the small aperture in the dam—which lets out the tiny stream the course of which we have been following upwards.

The Persian post-horse is a most wonderful animal. His endurance and powers of recovery are simply extraordinary. Having been properly fed, and enjoyed the few hours' rest, the animals, notwithstanding their wretched condition and the bad road, went fairly well.

On nearing Kohrut one is agreeably surprised to find among these barren mountains healthy patches of agriculture and beautiful groves of fruit-trees. The fruit is excellent here,—apples, plums, apricots, walnuts, and the Kohrut potatoes are said (by the people of Kohrut) to be the best in the world. The most remarkable thing about these patches of cultivation is that the soil in which they occur has been brought there—the mountain itself being rocky—and the imported earth is supported by means of strong stone walls forming long terraces. This speaks very highly for the industry of the natives, who are extremely hardworking. We go through these delightful groves for nearly one mile, when suddenly we find ourselves in front of Kohrut village, most picturesquely perched on the steep slope of the mountain.

The houses are of an absolutely different type from the characteristically domed Persian hovels one has so far come across. They have several storeys, two or even three—an extremely rare occurrence in Persian habitations. The lower windows are very small, like slits in the wall, but the top windows are large and square, usually with some lattice woodwork in front of them. The domed roofs have been discarded, owing to the quantity of wood obtainable here, and the roofs are flat and thatched, supported on long projecting beams and rafters. Just before entering the village a great number of ancient graves can be seen dotted on the mountain-side, and along the road. The view of the place, with its beautiful background of weird mountains, and the positions of the houses, the door of one on the level with the roof of the underlying one, against the face of the rock, are most striking.



THE INTERIOR OF CHAPPAR KHANA AT KOHRUT.

The inhabitants of this village are quite polite and friendly, and lack the usual aggressiveness so common at all the halting places in Persia.

Fresh horses were obtained at the Chappar Khana, and I proceeded on my journey at once. We still wound our way among mountains going higher and higher, until we got over the Kuh-i-buhlan (the pass). From the highest point a lovely view of the valley over which we had come from the northwest displayed itself in dark brown tints, and to the east we had a mass of barren mountains.

CHAPTER XXVI

Crossing the Pass—Held up by robbers—Amusing courtesy—Brigands to protect from brigands—Parting friends—Soh—Biddeshk—Copper and iron—Robber tribes—An Englishman robbed—A feature of Persian mountains—A military escort—How compensation is paid by the Persian Government—Murchikhar—Robbers and the guards—Ghiez—Distances from Teheran to Isfahan.

It was not till after sunset that we crossed the Pass, and, the horses being tired, my men and I were walking down the incline on the other side to give the animals a rest. It was getting quite dark, and as the chappar boy had warned me that there were brigands about the neighbourhood I walked close to my horse, my revolver being slung to the saddle. The place seemed absolutely deserted, and I was just thinking how still and reposeful the evening seemed, the noise of the horses' hoofs being the only disturbing element amid quiescent nature, when suddenly from behind innocent-looking rocks and boulders leapt up, on both sides of the road, about a dozen well-armed robbers, who attempted to seize the horses. Before they had time to put up their rifles they found themselves covered by my revolver and requested to drop their weapons or I would shoot them. They hastily complied with my request, and instead of ransacking my baggage, as they had evidently designed to do, had to confine themselves to polite remarks.

"You are very late on the road, sahib?" said one brigand, in a voice of assumed kindness and softness.

"Please put back your revolver. We will not harm you," said suavely and persuasively another, who displayed a most gaudy waistcoat which he evidently did not want perforated.

Sadek was in a great state of excitement, and entreated me not to shoot. "Persian robbers," he assured me, with a logic of his own, "do not kill the master until the servant has been killed, because it is the servant who is in charge of the luggage. . . . They would not steal anything now, but I must be kind to these fellows."

As is usual with persons accustomed to stalk other persons, I did not fail to notice that, while trying to attract my attention by conversation, my interlocutors were endeavouring to surround us. But I checked them in this, and warned them that I had met many brigands before, and was well acquainted with their ways. I hoped they would not compel me to shoot, which I would most certainly do if they attempted any tricks. They well understood that it was risky to try their luck, so they changed tactics altogether. The conversation that ensued was amusing.

"Sahib," shouted a boisterous robber, very gaily attired, and with cartridges in profusion in his belt, "there are lots of brigands near here and we want to protect you."

"Yes, I know there are brigands not far from here," I assented.

"We will escort you, for you are our friend, and if we lead you safely out of the mountains, maybe, sahib, you will give us backshish."

I felt certain that I could have no better protection against brigands than the brigands themselves, and preferred to have them under my own supervision rather than give them a chance of attacking us unexpectedly again some miles further on. Anyhow, I resolved to let them come as far as the next pass we had to cross, from which point the country would be more open and a sudden surprise impossible. So I accepted their offer with a politely expressed condition that every man must keep in front of me and not raise his rifle above his waist or I would send a bullet through him.

In the middle of the night we parted on the summit of the pass, and I gave them a good backshish—not so much for the service they had rendered me as for relieving for a few hours the monotony of the journey. They were grateful, and were the most civil brigands I have ever encountered.

While resting on the pass we had an amicable conversation, and I asked them where they got their beautiful clothes and the profusion of gold and silver watch-chains.

"It is not everybody we meet, sahib, that has a formidable revolver like yours," answered the boisterous brigand, with a fit of sarcastic merriment, echoed by all of us.

"Yes," I retorted in the same sarcastic spirit, "if it had not been for the revolver, possibly next time I came along this road I might meet the company dressed up like sahibs, in my clothes!"

I advised them to put up a white flag of truce next time they sprang out from behind rocks with the intention of holding up another Englishman, or surely some day or other there would be an accident.

We all laughed heartily, and parted with repeated salaams—and my luggage intact.

In the moonlight I took the precaution to see them well out of sight on one side of the pass before we began to descend on the other, and then we proceeded down the steep and rocky incline.

We reached Soh (8,000 feet) early in the morning, and went on to the Chappar house at Biddeshk. Here one abandons the region of the Kehriz Kohrud and Kale Karf mountains, west and east of the road respectively, and travels over a flat sandy country devoid of vegetation and water.

Copper and iron are to be found at several places in the mountains between Kashan and Soh, for instance near Gudjar, at Dainum, and at Kohruth.

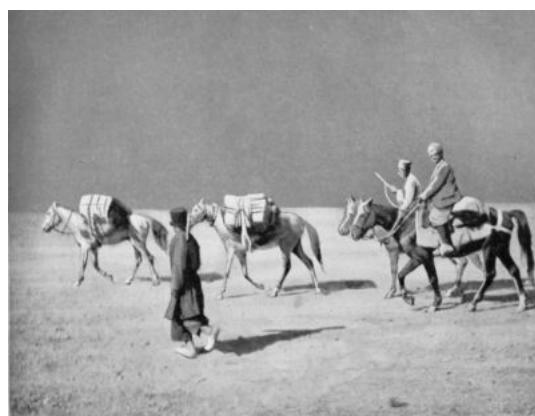
October is the month when the Backhtiari tribes are somewhat troublesome previous to their return to winter quarters. A great many caravans are attacked and robbed on this road, unless escorted by soldiers. Daring attempts have even been made to seize caravans of silver bullion for the Bank of

Persia. Only a few days before I went through, an English gentleman travelling from Isfahan was robbed between Soh and Murchikhar of all his baggage, money, and clothes.

The country lends itself to brigandage. One can see a flat plain for several miles to the north and south, but to the west and east are most intricate mountain masses where the robber bands find suitable hiding places for themselves and their booty. To the north-west we have flat open country, but to the west from Biddeshk there are as many as three different ranges of mountains. To the east rises the peak Kehriz Natenz. A great many low hill ranges lie between the main backbone of the high and important range extending from north-west to south-east, and the route we follow, and it is curious to notice, not only here but all over the parts of Persia I visited, that the great majority of sand dunes, and of hill and mountain ranges face north or north-east. In other words, they extend either from north-west to south-east, or roughly from west to east; very seldom from north to south.

From Biddeshk two soldiers insisted on escorting my luggage. I was advised to take them, for in default, one cannot claim compensation from the Persian Government should the luggage be stolen. In the case of *bona fide* European travellers, robbed on the road, the Persian Government is extremely punctual in making good the damage sustained and paying ample compensation.

The method employed by the local Governor, responsible for the safety of travellers on the road, is to inflict heavy fines on all the natives of the district in which the robbery has occurred,—a very simple and apparently effective way, it would seem, of stopping brigandage, but one which, in fact, increases it, because, in order to find the money to pay the fines, the natives are driven to the road, each successive larceny going towards part payment of the previous one.



CHAPPARING—THE AUTHOR'S POST HORSES.



PERSIAN ESCORT FIRING AT BRIGANDS.

One or two domed reservoirs of rain-water are found by the road-side, but the water is very bad.

The soldiers, laden with cartridges, ran along by the side of my horses and pretended to keep a sharp look-out for robbers. Every now and then they got much excited, loaded their rifles, and fired away shot after shot at phantom brigands, whom, they said, they perceived peeping above sand hills a long way off.

At Murchikhar there is nothing to be seen. The post-horses were very good here and I was able to go through this uninteresting part of the road at a good speed of from six to seven miles an hour. To the west the mountains were getting quite close, and, in fact, we had hills all round except to the south-east. Murchikhar is at a fairly high altitude, 5,600 ft.

One still heard much about brigands. Soldiers, armed to the teeth, insisted on accompanying my luggage. This, of course, involved endless backshish, but had to be put up with, as it is one of the perquisites of the guards stationed at the various stages. I have heard it stated that if one does not require their services it is often these protectors themselves who turn into robbers. There is a guard-house on the road, and the two soldiers stationed there told us that a large band of thirty robbers had visited them during the early hours of the morning, and had stolen from them all their provisions, money and tobacco!

We were not troubled in any way, and, with the exception of some suspicious horsemen a long way off making for the mountains, we hardly met a soul on the road.

A curious accident happened to one of my luggage horses. For some reason of his own he bolted, and galloped to the top of one of the *kanat* cones, when getting frightened at the deep hole before him he jumped it. His fore-legs having given way on the steep incline on the other side, he fell on

his head and turned a complete somersault, landing flat on his back, where, owing to the packs, he remained with his legs up in the air until we came to his aid and freed him of the loads.

On nearing Ghiez the track is over undulating country, but after that the road to Isfahan is good and flat, but very sandy and dusty. I got to Ghiez in the evening but proceeded at once to Isfahan. We galloped on the twelve miles, and in less than two hours I was most hospitably received in the house of Mr. Preece, the British Consul-General in Isfahan.

The distances from Teheran are as follows:—

From Teheran to Kum	24	farsakhs	96 miles.
" Kum to Kashan	17	"	68 "
" Kashan to Kohrut	7	"	28 "
" Kohrut to Biddeshk	6	"	24 "
" Biddeshk to Murchikhar	6	"	24 "
" Murchikhar to Ghiez	6	"	24 "
" Ghiez to Isfahan	3	"	12 "
<hr/>		<hr/>	
Total			69 farsakhs or 276 miles.

The time occupied in covering the whole distance, including halts and delays, was somewhat less than four days.

CHAPTER XXVII

Missionary work in Persia—Educational and medical work—No Mahommedan converts—Bibles—Julfa—Armenian settlement—Conservative customs—Armenian women—Their education—The Armenian man—Europeans—A bird's-eye view of Isfahan—Armenian graveyard—A long bridge—The Rev. James Loraine Garland—Mission among the Jews.

THERE is little to say of interest in connection with Missionary work in Persia, except that a considerable amount of good is being done in the educational and medical line. There are well-established schools and hospitals. The most praiseworthy institution is the supply of medicinal advice and medicine gratis or at a nominal cost. As far as the work of Christianising is concerned, it must be recollected that Missionaries are only allowed in Persia on sufferance, and are on no account permitted to make converts among the Mahomedans. Any Mussulman, man, woman, or child, who discards his religion for Christianity, will in all probability lose his life.

If any Christianising work is done at all it has to be done surreptitiously and at a considerable amount of risk to both convert and converter. Some interest in the Christian religion is nevertheless shown by Mussulmans of the younger generation—who now are practically atheists at heart—but whether this interest is genuine or not it is not for me to say. There is much in the Bible that impresses them, and I understand that constant applications are made for copies of translations into the Persian language. To avoid the great waste which occurred when Bibles were given away for nothing, a nominal charge is now made so as to prevent people throwing the book away or using it for evil purposes.

In Isfahan itself there are no missionaries among the Mahomedans, but some are to be found at Julfa, a suburb of Isfahan, on the south bank of the Zindah-rud (river). Julfa was in former days a prosperous Armenian settlement of some 30,000 inhabitants, but is now mostly in ruins since the great migration of Armenians to India.

There is an Armenian Archbishop at Julfa. He has no real power, but is much revered by the Armenians themselves. He provides priests for the Armenians of India.

A handsome cathedral, with elaborate ornamentations and allegorical pictures, is one of the principal structures in Julfa.

One cannot help admiring the Armenians of Julfa for retaining their conservative customs so long. Within the last few years, however, rapid strides have been made towards the abandonment of the ancient dress and tongue. At Julfa the Armenians have to a great extent retained their native language, which they invariably speak among themselves, although many of the men are equally fluent in Persian; but in cities like Teheran, where they are thrown into more direct contact with Persians, the Armenians are almost more conversant with Persian than with their own tongue. The men and women of the better classes have adopted European clothes, in which they might easily be mistaken for Southern Italians or Spaniards.

But in Julfa such is not the case, and the ancient style of dress is so far maintained. One is struck by the great number of women in the streets of Julfa and the comparative lack of men. This is because all able-bodied men migrate to India or Europe, leaving their women behind until sufficient wealth is accumulated to export them also to foreign lands.

The education of the Armenian women of the middle and lower classes consists principally in knitting socks—one sees rows of matrons and girls sitting on the doorsteps busily employed thus,—and in various forms of culinary instruction. But the better class woman is well educated in European fashion, and is bright and intelligent.

The Armenian woman, in her ample and speckless white robes, her semi-covered face, and beautiful soft black eyes, is occasionally captivating. The men, on the other hand, although handsome, have something indescribable about them that does not make them particularly attractive.

The Armenian man—the true type of the Levantine—has great business capacities, wonderful facility for picking up languages, and a persuasive flow of words ever at his command. Sceptical, ironical and humorous—with a bright, amusing manner alike in times of plenty or distress—a born philosopher, but uninspiring of confidence,—with eyes that never look straight into yours, but are

ever roaming all over the place,—with religious notions adaptable to business prospects,—very hospitable and good-hearted, given to occasional orgies,—such is the Persian-Armenian of to-day.

The more intelligent members of the male community migrate to better pastures, where they succeed, by steady hard work and really practical brains, in amassing considerable fortunes. The less enterprising remain at home to make and sell wine. Personally, I found Armenians surprisingly honest.

In Julfa the Europeans—of whom, except in business, there are few—have comfortable, almost luxurious residences. The principal streets of the Settlement are extremely clean and nice for Persia. The Indo-European Telegraph Office is also here. But the best part of Julfa—from a pictorial point of view—is the extensive Armenian cemetery, near a picturesque background of hills and directly on the slopes of Mount Sofia. There are hundreds of rectangular tombstones, many with neatly bevelled edges, and epitaphs of four or five lines. A cross is engraved on each grave, and some have a little urn at the head for flowers.

From the roof of a house situated at the highest point of the inclined plane, one obtains a magnificent bird's-eye view of Isfahan, its ancient grandeur being evinced by the great expanse of ruins all round it. The walls of Isfahan were said at one time to measure twenty-four miles in circumference. Like all other cities of Persia, Isfahan does not improve by too distant a view. The mud roofs are so alike in colour to the dried mud of the streets that a deadly monotony must follow, as a matter of course; but the many beautiful green gardens round about and in Isfahan itself are a great relief to the eye, and add much attraction to the landscape.

Most prominent of all buildings in the city are the great semi-spherical dome of the Mesjid-i-Shah, with its gracefully ornamented tiles; the Madrassah; the multi-columned, flat-roofed Palace, and the high minarets in couples, dotted all over the city. Then round about, further away, stand any number of curious circular towers, the pigeon towers.

The bed of the river between Isfahan and Julfa is over six hundred feet wide, and is spanned by three bridges. One of these, with thirty-four arches, is no less than 1,000 ft. in length, but is much out of repair.

The Armenian Christians of Julfa are enjoying comparative safety at present, but until quite recently were much persecuted by the Mahomedans, the Mullahs being particularly bitter against them.

One sees a great many priests about Julfa, and as I visited the place on a Sunday the people looked so very demure and sanctimonious—I am speaking of the Armenians—on their way out of church; taciturn and with head low or talking in a whisper, all toddling alongside the wall—as people from church generally do,—that I must confess I was glad when I left this place of oppressive sanctity and returned to Isfahan. Somehow, Julfa impresses one as a discordant note in Persian harmony—although a very fine and pleasing note in itself.

Until quite recently the Persians objected to foreigners residing even in Isfahan itself. The officials of the Bank of Persia were the first to take up their abode within the city wall, then soon after came Mr. Preece, our able and distinguished Consul-General.

There is now a third Englishman residing in Jubareh, the Jewish quarter, the Revd. James Loraine Garland, of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews of Isfahan. Why such a Society should exist at all seems to any one with a sense of humour bewildering, but on getting over the first shock of surprise one finds that of all the Missions to Persia it is probably the most sensible, and worked on practical, sound, useful lines. Much as I am unfavourably inclined towards religious Missions of any kind, I could not help being impressed with Mr. Garland's very interesting work.

The first time I saw Mr. Garland I was nearly run over by him as he was riding a race with a sporting friend on the Golahek road near Teheran—raising clouds of dust, much to the concern of passers-by.

The same day I met Mr. Garland in Teheran, when he was garbed in the ample clothes of the sporting friend, his own wardrobe having been stolen, with his money and all other possessions, by robbers on the Isfahan-Kashan road. In fact, he was the Englishman referred to in Chapter XXVI.

Being somewhat of a sportsman myself, this highly-sporting clergyman appealed to me. Extremely gentlemanly, courteous, tactful, sensible and open-minded, he was not a bit like a missionary. He was a really good man. His heart and soul were in his work. He very kindly asked me to visit his Mission in Isfahan, and it was a real pleasure to see a Mission worked on such sensible lines.

The first Mission to the Jews of Persia and Chaldea was established in 1844 by the Reverend Dr. Stern, who resided part of the year in Bagdad, and the remainder in Isfahan. The work was up-hill, and in 1865 the Mission was suspended.

CHAPTER XXVIII

The Mission among Jews—Schools for boys and girls—A practical institution—The Jews of Persia—Persecution by Persians—Characteristics of Jews—Girls—Occupations—Taxation—The social level of Jews.

FROM October, 1889, to December, 1891, a Christianised Jew of Teheran, named Mirza Korollah, worked in Isfahan as the representative of the Society for promoting Christianity among the Jews. A Bible dépôt was opened, and a school started at the request of the Jews themselves. In December, 1891, however, Mirza Korollah was banished from the city, and the work was again interrupted.

In 1897, Mr. Garland volunteered to undertake the work in Persia, and his offer was gladly accepted. On his arrival in Isfahan he found, he told me, a prosperous boys' school, that had been re-opened in 1894 by a native Jewish Christian, who rejoiced in the name of Joseph Hakim, and who carried on the educational work under the supervision of members of the Church Missionary Society resident in Julfa. It was deemed advisable to commence a night-school, as many of the boys were unable to attend day classes. The scheme answered very well, and has been steadily continued.

As many as 200 boys attended the school daily in February, 1898, a fact that shows the success of the new enterprise from the very beginning.

At the invitation of a number of Jewesses, Miss Stuart, the Bishop of Waiapu's daughter, kindly consented to go over twice a week to the Jewish quarter to instruct them in the Holy Scriptures. This led to the commencement of a girls' school with twelve pupils, at a time of great turmoil and anxiety. However, the experiment had the happiest results.

It was not, nevertheless, till 1899 that Mr. Garland was able to take up his abode in the Jewish quarter. He met with no opposition whatever from Mahomedans or Jews. The usual Sunday service, attended by converts and inquirers, and a Saturday afternoon class were commenced in 1899, and have uninterruptedly continued to the present time.

To me, personally, the most important part of the Mission, and one to which more time is devoted than to praying, was the excellent carpentry class for boys, begun in 1900, and the carpet-weaving apparatus set up on the premises for the girls. The former has been a great success, even financially, and is paying its way. The latter, although financially not yet a success, is of great value in teaching the girls how to weave. Necessarily, so many hands have to be employed in the manufacture of a large carpet, and the time spent in the manufacture is so long, that it is hardly possible to expect financial prosperity from mere beginners; but the class teaches the girls a way to earn money for themselves in future years.

Both trades were selected by Mr. Garland, particularly because they were the most suitable in a country where Jews are excluded from the more honest and manly trades, and Jewesses often grow up to be more of a hindrance than a help to their husbands. Worse still is the case of Jews who become Christians; they have the greatest difficulty in earning their living at all.

These industrial occupations are a great practical help to the studies of the pupils, who are taught, besides their own language, Persian and Hebrew, and, if they wish, English, geography, etc.

More frivolous but less remunerative forms of recreation, such as cricket, tennis, football, or gymnastic drills,—which invariably accompany Christianity in the East, and develop most parts of a convert's anatomy except his brain,—have not been deemed of sufficient importance among the Jews of Isfahan, who would, moreover, think our best English games or muscle-developers in the highest degree indecorous and unseemly.

On the whole the Society's work among the Jews of Teheran, Hamadan and Isfahan has been most encouraging, and this is to be put down entirely to the tact and personal influence of Mr. Garland, who is greatly respected by Jews and Mahomedans alike. No better testimony to the appreciation of his work could exist than the fact that in his interesting journeys through Persia, he is frequently invited to preach in crowded synagogues.

It seems probable that the Jews of Persia are descendants of the Ten Tribes, and more probable still that Jews have resided in Isfahan from its earliest foundation.

In the tenth century—under the Dilemi dynasty—Isfahan consisted of two cities, Yahoodieh (Jewry) and Shehristan (the City). In the middle of the twelfth century, according to Benjamin of Tudela, the Jews of Isfahan numbered 15,000.

At present they number about 5,000. They are mostly pedlars by profession, or engaged in making silk thread (Abreesham Kâr, Charkhtâbee, etc.). There are a few merchants of comparative influence. Jewellers and traders in precious stones, brokers and wine-sellers are frequent, but the majority consists almost entirely of diviners, musicians, dancers—music and dancing are considered low, contemptible occupations in Persia—scavengers, and beggars.

The Jews of Isfahan, like those of all other cities in Persia, have been subjected to a great deal of oppression. There is a story that Timour-i-Lang (Tamerlane—end of 14th century) was riding past a synagogue in Isfahan, where the Mesjid-i-Ali now stands, and that the Jews made such a horrible noise at their prayers (in saying the "Shema, Israel" on the Day of Atonement) that his horse bolted and he was thrown and lamed. Hence his name, and hence also a terrible massacre of the Jews, which reduced their number to about one-third.

Even to this day it is not easy for Jews to obtain justice against Mahomedans. Only as recently as 1901 a Jew was murdered in cold blood a few miles from Isfahan, and his body flung into the river. Although the murder had been witnessed, and the murderer was well known, no punishment was ever inflicted upon him.



JEWISH GIRLS, ISFAHAN.



AN ISFAHAN JEW.

The Jews of Isfahan possess striking features, as can be seen by a characteristic head of a man reproduced in the illustration. The face is generally very much elongated, with aquiline nose of abnormal length and very broad at the nostrils. The brow is heavy, screening deeply-sunken eyes revealing a mixed expression of sadness and slyness, tempered somewhat by probable abuse of animal qualities. Of a quiet and rather sulky nature—corroded by ever-unsatisfied avidity—assumedly courteous, but morose by nature,—with a mighty level head in the matter of business; such is the Jew of Isfahan. He is extremely picturesque, quite biblical in his long loose robe and skull cap, with turban wound tight round his head.

Jewish girls when very young are nice-looking without being beautiful, very supple and pensive, and with expressive eyes. They lack the unsteady, insincere countenance of the men, and have reposeful, placid faces, with occasional good features. There is a good deal of character in their firmly closed lips, the upper lip being slightly heavy but well-shaped. The inside of the mouth is adorned with most regular, firm, and beautiful teeth. Curiously enough, the typical Jewish nose—so characteristic in men—is seldom markedly noticeable in women. I have even seen Jewish girls with turned-up noses. Their arms are beautifully modelled, and the hands as a whole extremely graceful, with unusually long and supple fingers, but with badly-shaped nails of an unwholesome colour.

Jewesses in Persia are not kept in seclusion and go about with uncovered faces, which exposes them to constant and unpleasant insult from the Mahomedans. They dress differently from Persian women, with a long skirt of either black, blue, or coloured cotton. The head is framed in a white kerchief, leaving exposed the jet black hair parted in the middle and covering the temples. Over that is worn a long cloak, either black or white, almost identical with the Persian "chudder."

Jewesses are said to be most affectionate and devoted to their husbands and their families. They are extremely amenable to reason—except in cases of jealousy, which is one of the leading characteristics of the race in general and of Jewish women in particular. They are hard-working, intelligent, thrifty. They take life seriously: are endowed with no sense of humour to speak of—it would be difficult to have any under their circumstances—and whether owing to severe anaemia, caused by wretched and insufficient food, or to some external influence, are often affected by melancholia.

Soft and shy in manner and speech, under normal circumstances, pale and silent, the Jewish woman is not unattractive.

One of the few occupations open to Jewesses is the practice of midwifery.

Hunted as the Jews are by everybody in the streets, and in the bazaar, insulted, spat upon, the women often compelled to prostitution, it is to be marvelled that any honesty at all is left in them.

The higher Persian schools and colleges do not admit Jews as students, nor is education permitted to them even in the lower Persian schools. Therefore, the welcome work of Mr. Garland is much needed and appreciated. A special quarter is reserved in which the Jews must live, huddled together, the majority of them in abject poverty. Until of late no peace was given them. Their customs were interfered with in every way by vagabond Persians, and the little money they made by industrious habits was extorted from them by officials or by the enterprising Persian to whom the Jewish community was farmed out.

The Jews of a city are taxed a certain sum, usually beyond what they can afford to pay. Some speculator undertakes to pay the amount for them to the local Governor and receives authority to compensate himself from the Jewish community as best he can, either by making them work, or trade, or by selling their clothes or depriving them of the few articles of furniture they may possess.

Until quite lately, at public festivities the meek and resigned Jews were driven before an insulting mob who held them in derision, and exposed them to most abject treatment; some of their number ending by being pitched into the water-tank which adorns the courtyard or garden of most residences. Little by little, however, with the spread of civilisation, Jews have been spared the torture of these baths.

The Jew is looked upon as unclean and untrustworthy by the Persian, who refuses to use him as a soldier, but who gladly employs him to do all sorts of dirty jobs which Persian pride would not allow him to do himself. His social level therefore stands even lower than that of the Shotri of India, the outcast who does not stop at the basest occupations.

The majority of the older Jews are illiterate, but not unintelligent. Each city has one or more Rabbis or priests, but they have no power and receive a good share of the insults in the Persian bazaars.

Whatever feeling of repulsion towards the race one may have, the position of the Jews in Persia—although infinitely better than it was before—is still a most pathetic one.

CHAPTER XXIX

The square of Isfahan—The Palace gate—The entrance to the bazaar—Beggars—Formalities and etiquette—The bazaar—Competition—How Persians buy—Long credit—Arcades—Hats—Cloth shops—Sweet shops—Butchers—Leather goods—Saddle-bags—The bell shop—Trunks.

THE great square of Isfahan is looked upon as the centre of the city. It is a huge oblong, with the great and beautiful dome of the Mesjid-i-Shah on one side of the long rectangle, and another high domed mosque with two high minarets at the end. The very impressive red and white quadrangular palace gate, flat-topped, and with a covered blue verandah supported on numerous slender columns, stands on the side of the square opposite the Mesjid-i-Shah mosque.

To the north of the great square one enters the bazaar by a high gate, handsomely tiled with flower ornaments; this gateway has three lower windows and a triple upper one, and a doorway under the cool shade of the outer projecting pointed archway. To the right of the entrance as one looks at it, rises a three-storied building as high as the gate of the bazaar. It has a pretty upper verandah, the roof of which is supported on transverse sets of three wooden columns each, except the outer corner roof-supports, which are square and of bricks. In front is an artistic but most untidy conglomeration of awnings to protect from the sun pedlars, merchants and people enjoying their kilians, or a thimbleful of tea.

There are men selling fruit which is displayed upon the dirty ground, and there are tired horses with dismounted cavaliers sleeping by their side, the reins fastened for precaution to a heavy stone or slung to the arm. One sees masses of children of all ages and conditions of health, from the neatly attired son of the wealthy merchant, who disports himself with his eldest brother, to the orphan boy, starving, and in rags covered with mud. There is a little cripple with a shrunken leg, and further, an old man with lupus in its most ghastly form. Disreputably-clothed soldiers lie about in the crowd, and a woman or two with their faces duly screened in white cloths may be seen.

The sight of a sahib always excites great curiosity in Persia. Followed by a crowd of loafers and most insistent beggars, one forces one's way into the crowded bazaar, while the ghulams of the Consulate—with whom it would be indecorous to go anywhere—shove the people on one side or the other without ceremony, drive the donkeys, laden with wood or panniers of fruit, into the shops—much to the horror of the shopman,—and disband the strings of mules and the horsemen to make room for the passing sahib.

It is very difficult, under such circumstances, to stop any length of time at any particular spot to study the shops, the shop-people, and the buyers, for instead of being an unobserved spectator, one is at all times the principal actor in the scene and the centre of attention, and therefore a most disturbing element in the crowd.

There are so many complicated and tiresome formalities to be adhered to in order to avoid offending the natives, or the officials, or the susceptibilities of foreign residents, who seem to feel responsible for the doings of every traveller—and who, at all events, remain to suffer for the untactful deeds of some of them,—and there are so many things one must not do for fear of destroying the prestige of one's country, that, really, if one possesses a simple and practical mind, one gets rather tired of Persian town life, with its exaggerated ties, its empty outward show and pomp and absolute lack of more modest aims which, after all, make real happiness in life.



THE SQUARE, ISFAHAN.

As for European ladies it is considered most improper to be seen with uncovered faces in the bazaar. In fact, walking anywhere in the town they are generally exposed to insult.

I once took a walk through the various bazaars, but the second time, at our Consul's recommendation, was advised to ride in state, with gold-braided, mounted Consulate ghulams preceding and following me, while I myself rode a magnificent stallion presented by Zil-es-Sultan to our Consul. The horse had not been ridden for some time and was slightly fresh. The place to which we directed our animals was the brass bazaar, the most crowded and diabolically noisy place in the Shah's dominions.

The sudden change from the brilliant light of the sun to the pitch darkness of the vaulted bazaar, affected one's sight, and it was some few seconds before one could distinguish anything, although one could hear the buzzing noise of an excited crowd, and the cries of the ghulams ordering the people to make room for the cavalcade.

In nearly all bazaars of the principal cities of Persia a very good custom prevails. One or more streets are devoted entirely to the same article, so that the buyer may conveniently make comparisons, and the various merchants are also kept up to the mark by the salutary competition close at hand thus rendered unavoidable. A Persian does not go to a shop to buy anything without going to every other shop in the bazaar to ask whether he can get a similar article better and cheaper. Such a convenience as fixed prices, alike for all, does not exist in the Persian bazaar, and prices are generally on the ascending or descending scale, according to the merchant's estimate of his customer's wealth. It is looked upon as a right and a duty to extort from a rich man the maximum of profit, whereas from a poor fellow a few shais benefit are deemed sufficient.

To buy anything at all in the bazaar involves great loss of time—and patience,—excessive consumption of tea plus the essential kalian-smoking. Two or three or more visits are paid to the stall by Persian buyers before they can come to an agreement with the merchant, and when the goods are delivered it is the merchant's turn to pay endless visits to his customer's house before he can obtain payment for them. Long credit is generally given by merchants to people known to them. There is comparatively little ready money business done except in the cheapest goods.

We shoved our way along through the very narrow streets with a long row before us of sun columns, piercing through the circular openings in the domed arcade of the bazaar, and projecting brilliant patches of light now on brightly-coloured turbans, now on the black chudder of a woman, now on the muddy ground constantly sprinkled with water to keep the streets cool.

There are miles of bazaar, in Teheran and Isfahan, roofed over in long arcades to protect the shops and buyers from the sun in summer, from the rain and snow in winter. The height of the arcade is from thirty to sixty feet, the more ancient ones being lower than the modern ones.

To any one well acquainted with other Eastern countries there is absolutely nothing in a Persian bazaar that is worth buying. The old and beautiful objects of art have left the country long ago, and the modern ones have neither sufficient artistic merit nor intrinsic value to be worth the trouble and expense of sending them home. For curiosity's sake—yes, there are a few tawdry articles which may amuse friends in Europe, but what I mean is that there is nothing that is really of intense interest or skilful workmanship, such as one can find in Japan, in China, in Morocco or Egypt.

We ride through the street of hatters, each shop with walls lined with piles of *kolah* hats, black and brimless, shaped either in the section of a cone or rounded with a depression on the top. They are made of astrakan or of black felt, and are worn by the better people; but further on we come to cheaper shops, where spherical skull caps of white or light brown felt are being manufactured for the lower classes.

As we ride along, a stinging smell of dyes tells us that we are in the cloth street, indigo colours prevailing, and also white and black cottons and silks. One cannot help pitying the sweating shopman, who is busy unrolling cloths of various makes before a number of squatting women, who finger each and confabulate among themselves, and request to have the roll deposited by their side for further consideration with a mountain of other previously unrolled fabrics,—just like women at home. The rolls are taken from neat wooden shelves, on which, however, they seldom rest. Soiled remnants of European stocks play a very important part in this section of the bazaar.

On turning round a corner we have shoes and boots, foreign made, of the favourite side-elastic pattern, or the native white canvas ones with rope soles—most comfortable and serviceable for walking. The local leather ones have strong soles with nails and turned-up toes, not unlike the familiar Turkish shoe; while the slippers for women have no back to them at the heel and have fancy toes.

Then come the attractive sweet-shops, with huge trays of transparent candy, and the *Pash mak* pulled sugar, as white and light as raw silk, most delicious but sticky. In bottles above, the eye roams from highly coloured confetti to *Abnabad* and *Kors* or other deadly-looking lozenges, while a crowd of enraptured children deposit shais in the hands of the prosperous trader, who promptly weighs and gives in exchange a full measure of *rahat-ul-holoom*, "the ease of the throat," or candied sugar, duly packed in paper bags.

There is nothing very attractive in the butchers' bazaar; the long rows of skinned animals black with flies, and in various degrees of freshness, made even less artistic by ornamentations of paper rosettes and bits of gold and silver paper. Beef, camel, mutton, game and chickens, all dead and with throats cut—the Mahomedan fashion of killing—can be purchased here, but the smell of meat is so strong and sickening that we will promptly adjourn to the leather-work bazaar.

For a man, this is probably the most typical and interesting section of the Persian retail commerce. There is something picturesque and artistic in the clumsy silver or brass or iron mounted saddles, with handsome red, or green, or brown ample leather flaps, gracefully ornamented with more or less elaboration to suit the pockets of different customers. Then the harness is pretty, with its silver inlaid iron decoration, or solid silver or brass, and the characteristic stirrups, nicely chiselled and not unlike the Mexican ones. The greater part of the foot can rest on the stirrup, so broad is its base. Then come the saddlebags of all sizes, the *horjin*, in cloth, in sacking, in expensive leather, in carpeting, of all prices, with an ingenious device of a succession of loops fastening the one into the other, the last with a padlock, to secure the contents of the bag from intrusive hands.

These *horjins*—or double bags—are extremely convenient and are the most usual contrivance in Persia for conveying luggage on horseback or mules.

Then in the lower part of the shop there is a grand display of leather purses, sheaths for knives, and a collection of leather stock whips, gracefully tied into multiple knots.

In this same bazaar, where everything in connection with riding or loading animals can be purchased, are also to be found the bell shops. These confine themselves particularly to horses', mules' and camels' neck decorations. Long tassels, either red or black, in silk or dyed horsehair, silk or leather bands with innumerable small conical shrill bells, and sets of larger bells in successive gradations of sizes, one hanging inside the other, are found here. Then there are some huge cylindrical bells standing about two and a half feet high, with scrolls and geometrical designs on their sides. These are for camels and are not intended to hang from the neck. They are slung on one side under the lighter of the two loads of the pack.



THE PALACE GATE, ISFAHAN.

Next, one is attracted by a shop full of leather trunks, of the reddest but not the best morocco, stretched while wet upon a rough wooden frame. Primitive ornamentations are painted on the leather, and the corners of each box are strengthened with tin caps and rings. The trunks for pack animals are better made than the others, and are solidly sewn, with heavy straps and rings to sling them upon the saddles. Gaudy revolver pouches, cartridge belts, and slings for daggers are to be purchased in the same shop.

CHAPTER XXX

The Brass Bazaar—Mirror shop—Curdled milk—A tea shop—Fruit and vegetable bazaar—The walnut seller—The Auctioneer—Pipe shops—Barber—Headdress—Bread shops—Caravanserais—The day of rest.

WINDING our way through the labyrinth of narrow streets, and meeting a crescendo of diabolical din as we approach it, we emerge into a more spacious and lighter arcade, where hundreds of men are hammering with all their might upon pieces of copper that are being shaped into trays, pots with double spouts, or pans. This is the coppersmiths' bazaar. On a long low brick platform, extending from one end to the other on both sides of the street, is tastefully arranged the work already finished. Huge circular trays have coarse but elaborate ornamentations of figures, trees and birds chiselled upon them—not unlike the Indian Benares trays in general appearance, but not in the character of the design. Copper vases with spouts are gracefully shaped, the ancient Persian models being maintained. They are much used by Persians in daily life. More elaborate is the long-necked vessel with a circular body and slender curved spout, that rests upon a very quaint and elegantly designed wash-basin with perforated cover and exaggerated rim. This is used after meals in the household of the rich, when an attendant pours tepid water scented with rose-water upon the fingers, which have been used in eating instead of a fork. These vessels and basins are usually of brass. All along the ground, against the wall, stand sets of concentric trays of brass, copper and pewter, and metal tumblers innumerable, having execrable designs upon them, and rendered more hideous by being nickel-plated all over. Each shop, about ten to twenty feet long and eight to fifteen wide, has a furnace in one corner.

Considering the few and primitive tools employed, it is really wonderful that the work is as good as it is. The polishing of trays is generally done with their feet by boys, who stand on them and with a circular motion of the body revolve the tray to the right and left upon a layer of wet sand until, after some hours of labour, a sufficiently shiny surface is obtained by friction.

I became much interested in watching a man joining together two pieces of metal to be turned into an amphora, but the noise made the horse I rode very restless. It was impossible to hear any one speak, the din of the hammered metal being so acute and being echoed in each dome of the arcade. The horse became so alarmed when the bellows began to blow upon the fire that he tried to throw me, first by standing on his fore-legs and scattering the crowd of yelling natives with his hindlegs, then by standing up erect the other way about. In a moment the place was clear of people; some had leapt on to the side platform: others had rushed inside the shops. The horse delighted in piroetting about, kicking the nearest metal vases and trays all over the place, and causing quite a commotion. It was rather amusing to watch the rapidity with which the merchants a little way off withdrew their goods to safety inside the premises to prevent further damage. The horse, being then satisfied that he could not shake me off, continued the journey more or less peacefully through the bazaar.

Here is a mirror shop—imports from Austria. There the flourishing grain merchants, whose premises are the neatest and cleanest of the whole bazaar. Each merchant tastily displays his various cereals in heaps on speckless enormous brass trays, and by the side of them dried fruit, in which he also deals extensively. His shop is decorated with silvered or red or blue glass balls.

Further on is another very neat place, the curdled-milk retailer's, with large flat metal tanks filled with milk, and a great many trays, large and little, in front of his premises. He, too, keeps his place and belongings—but not himself—most beautifully clean. He does a flourishing business.

Every now and then we come upon a very spacious and well-lighted room, with gaudy candelabras of Bohemian glass, and a large steaming samovar. This is a tea-shop. There are plenty of men in it, in green or brown or blue long coats, and all squatting lazily, cross-legged, sipping tea from tiny glasses and being helped to sugar from a large tray containing a mountain of it.

The fruit and vegetable bazaar is always a feature of Persian city markets, water-melons, cucumbers, grapes, apples, pomegranates, almonds and walnuts playing a prominent part in the various displays. Then there is the retailer of peeled walnuts, a man who wears a red cap and green coat, and who sells his goods spread on a brass tray. The walnuts as soon as peeled from their skin are thrown into a large basin full of water, and when properly washed are spread on the tray to dry, ready for consumption.

The walnut man is generally a character. He keeps his stall open even at night, when other shops are closed, and has plenty to say to all the passers-by on the merits of his walnuts.

To enumerate all one sees in the bazaar would take a volume to itself, but on glancing through we see the excited auctioneer in his white turban calling out figures on an ascending scale, and tapping on a piece of wood when a sufficient sum is offered and no more bids are forthcoming. He has assistants showing round the various articles as they are being sold,—umbrellas, tooth-brushes, mirrors, knives, etc.

The pipe shops are small—with black and red and blue earthenware cups for the kalian. There is not much variety in the shape of the pipes except that some are made to be used in the joined hands as a draw-pipe for the smoke, the cup being held between the thumbs. Others, the majority of them, are intended for the top part of the kalian.

The barber's shop is a quaint one, remarkably clean with whitewashed walls and a brick floor. Up to some five feet along the walls is nailed a cloth, usually red, against which the customers rest their heads while being shaved. Hung upon the walls are scissors of all sizes, razors, and various other implements such as forceps for drawing teeth, sharp lancets for bleeding, the knives used for the operation of circumcision, and a variety of wooden combs and branding irons.

Yes, the Persian barber has multifarious occupations. He is surgeon, dentist and masseur, besides being an adept with comb and razor. He is—like his brother of the West—an incessant talker, and knows all the scandal of the town. While at work he has a bowl of clean water by his side which he uses on the patient's face or top of the skull and neck, which are in male Persians all clean-shaved. No soap is used by typical Persian barbers. Their short razors, in wooden cases, are stropped on the barber's arm, or occasionally leg, and are quite sharp.

The younger folks of Persia shave the top of the skull leaving long locks of hair at the side of the head, which are gracefully pushed over the ear and left hanging long behind, where they are cut in a straight horizontal line round the neck. This fashion is necessitated by the custom in Persia of never removing the heavy headgear. The elder people, in fact, shave every inch of the scalp, but balance this destruction of hair by growing a long beard, frequently dyed bright red or jet black with henna and indigo.

The bread-shops of Persia are quaint, a piece of bread being sometimes as big as a small blanket and about as thick. These huge flat loaves are hung up on slanting shelves. In Central and Southern Persia, however, the smaller kind of bread is more commonly used, not unlike an Indian *chapati*. A ball of flour paste is well fingered and pawed until it gets to a semi-solid consistency. It is then flung several times from one palm of the hand into the other, after which it is spread flat with a roller upon a level stone slab. A few indentations are made upon its face with the end of the baker's fingers; it is taken up and thrown with a rapid movement upon the inner domed portion of a small oven, some three to four feet high, within which blazes a big charcoal fire. Several loaves are thus baked against the hot walls and roof of the oven, which has an aperture at the top, and when properly roasted and beginning to curl and fall they are seized with wonderful quickness and brought out of the oven. Gloves on the hands and a cover over the baker's face are necessary to prevent burns and asphyxia from the escaping gases of the charcoal from the aperture over which the man must lean every time.

In the bazaars of large cities one finds every now and then large caravanserais, handsome courts with a tank of water in the centre and shops all round. It is here that wholesale dealers and traders have their premises, and that caravans are accommodated on their arrival with goods. There are generally trees planted all round these courts to shade the animals and buyers, and often a high and broad platform or verandah all round, where the goods are spread for inspection. Some of the richer caravanserais are quite handsome, with neat latticed windows and doors. The walls are painted white. The court is crammed with tired camels, mules, beggars and loafers.

The camel men squat in one corner to smoke their pipes and eat their bread, while the merchants form another ring up above on the verandah, where prices are discussed at the top of their voices, a crowd of ever-to-be-found loafers taking active part in the discussion.

On a Friday, the day of rest of the Mahomedan, the bazaar, so crowded on other days, is absolutely deserted. All the shops—if a hatter or two be excepted—are barricaded with heavy wooden shutters and massive padlocks of local or Russian make. Barring a dog or two either lying asleep along the wall, or scraping a heap of refuse in the hope of satisfying hunger—there is hardly a soul walking about. Attracted by a crowd in the distance, one finds a fanatic gesticulating like mad and shouting at the top of his voice before an admiring crowd of ragamuffins squatting round him in a circle.

On these holidays, when the streets are clear, the effect of the columns of sunlight pouring down from the small circular apertures from each dome of the arcade, and some twenty feet apart, is very quaint. It is like a long colonnade of brilliant light in the centre of the otherwise dark, muddy-looking, long, dirty tunnel. At noon, when the sun is on the meridian, these sun columns are, of course, almost perfectly vertical, but not so earlier in the morning or later in the afternoon.

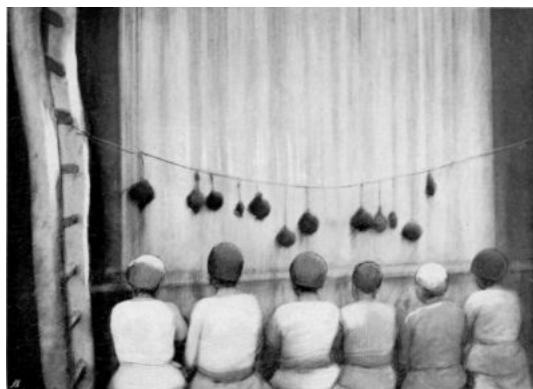
CHAPTER XXXI

A carpet factory—Children at work—The process of carpet-making—Foreign influence in the design—Aniline dyes—"Ancient carpets" manufactured to-day—Types of carpets—Kerman carpets—Isfahan silk carpets—Kurdistan rugs—Birjand and Sultanabad carpets—Carpets made by wandering tribes—Jewellers—Sword-makers and gunsmiths—Humming birds.

A visit to a carpet factory proves interesting. The horses must be left, for it is necessary to squeeze through a low and narrow door in order to enter the shed where the carpets are made.

Every one is familiar with the intricate and gorgeous designs of Persian carpets, and one imagines that only veteran skilful artisans can tackle such artistic work. One cannot, therefore, help almost collapsing with surprise on seeing mere children from the age of six to ten working away at the looms with a quickness and ease that makes one feel very small.

In badly lighted and worse ventilated rooms, they sit perched in long rows on benches at various altitudes from the floor, according to the progression and size of the carpet, the web of which is spread tight vertically in front of them. Occasionally when the most difficult patterns are executed, or for patterns with European innovations in the design, a coloured drawing is hung up above the workers; but usually there is nothing for them to go by, except that a superintendent—an older boy—sings out the stitches in a monotonous cadence. A row of coloured balls of the various coloured threads employed in the design hang from the loom just within reach of the boys' hands.



BOYS WEAVING A CARPET.



COTTON CLEANERS.

The process of carpet-making is extremely simple, consisting merely of a series of twisted—not absolutely knotted—coloured worsted threads, each passing round one of the main threads of the foundation web. The catching-up of each consecutive vertical thread in the web, inserting the coloured worsted, giving it the twist that makes it remain in its position, and cutting it to the proper length, is done so quickly by the tiny, supple fingers of the children that it is impossible to see how it is done at all until one requests them to do it slowly for one's benefit. After each horizontal row of twisted threads, a long horizontal thread is interwoven, and then the lot is beaten down with a heavy iron comb with a handle to it, not unlike a huge hair-brush cleaner. There are different modes of twisting the threads, and this constitutes the chief characteristic of carpets made in one province or another.

The labour involved in their manufacture is enormous, and some carpets take several years to manufacture. The children employed are made to work very hard at the looms—seldom less than twelve or fourteen hours a day—and the exertion upon their memory to remember the design, which has taken them several months to learn by heart, is great. The constant strain on the eyes, which have to be kept fixed on each successive vertical thread so as not to pick up the wrong one, is very injurious to their sight. Many of the children of the factories I visited were sore-eyed, and there was hardly a poor mite who did not rub his eyes with the back of his hand when I asked him to suspend work for a moment. The tension upon their pupils must be enormous in the dim light.

Although made in a primitive method, the carpet weaving of Persia is about the only manufacture that deserves a first-class place in the industries of Iran. The carpets still have a certain artistic merit, although already contaminated to no mean extent by European commerciality. Instead of the beautiful and everlasting vegetable dyes which were formerly used for the worsted and silks, and the magnificent blue, reds, greens, greys and browns, ghastly aniline dyed threads—raw and hurtful to the eye—are very commonly used now. Also, of the carpets for export to Europe and America the same care is not taken in the manufacture as in the ancient carpets, and the bastard design is often shockingly vulgarised to appease the inartistic buyer.

But even with all these faults, Persian carpets, if not to the eye of an expert, for all general purposes are on the whole better than those of any other manufacture. They have still the great advantage of being made entirely by hand instead of by machinery. It is not unwise, before buying a Persian carpet, to rub it well with a white cloth. If it is aniline-dyed, some of the colour will come off, but if the old Persian dyes have been used no mark should remain on the cloth. However, even without resorting to this, it must be a very poor eye indeed that cannot recognise at once the terrible raw colours of aniline from the soft, delicious tones of vegetable dyes, which time can only soften but never discolour.

To manufacture "ancient carpets" is one of the most lucrative branches of modern Persian carpet-making. The new carpets are spread in the bazaar, in the middle of the street where it is most crowded, and trampled upon for days or weeks, according to the age required, foot-passengers and their donkeys, mules and camels making a point of treading on it in order to "add age" to the manufacturer's goods. When sufficiently worn down the carpet is removed, brushed, and eventually sold for double or treble its actual price owing to its antiquity!

There are some thirty different types of carpets in Persia. The Kerman carpets are, to my mind, the most beautiful I saw in Persia, in design, colour and softness. They seem more original and graceful, with conventional plant, flower and bird representations of delicate and very varied tints, and not so much geometrical design about them as is the case in the majority of Persian carpets.

Less successful, in fact quite ugly, but quaint, are those in which very large and ill-proportioned figures are represented. One feels Arab influence very strongly in a great many of the Kerman designs. They say that Kerman sheep have extremely soft and silky hair, and also that the Kerman water possesses some chemical qualities which are unsurpassable for obtaining most perfect tones of colour with the various dyes.

The principal carpet factory is in the Governor's Palace, where old designs are faithfully copied, and really excellent results obtained. The present Governor, H. E. Ala-el-Mulk, and his nephew take particular interest in the manufacture, and devote much attention to the carpets, which retain the ancient native characteristics, and are hardly contaminated by foreign influence.

The Isfahan silk carpets are also very beautiful, but not quite so reposeful in colour nor graceful in design. Those of Kurdistan are principally small prayer rugs, rather vivid in colour, and much used by Mahomedans in their morning and evening salaams towards Mecca. In Khorassan, Meshed, Sultanabad, Kaian (Kain) and Birjand, some very thick carpets are made, of excellent wear, but not so very artistic. In the Birjand ones, brown camel-hair is a prevailing colour, used too freely as a background, and often taking away from the otherwise graceful design. Sultanabad is probably the greatest centre of carpet-making for export nearly every household possessing a loom. The firm of Ziegler & Co. is the most extensive buyer and exporter of these carpets. The Herat (Afghanistan) carpets are also renowned and find their way mostly to Europe.

In Shiraz and Faristan we find the long narrow rugs, as soft as velvet, and usually with geometrical designs on them. Red, blue and white are the prevalent colours.

It would be too long to enumerate all the places where good carpets are made; but Kermanshah, Tabriz, Yezd,—in fact, nearly all big centres, make carpets, each having special characteristics of their own, although in general appearance bearing to the uninitiated more or less similar semblance.

The rugs made by the wandering tribes of South-east and South-west Persia are quaint and interesting. The Persian Beluch rugs are somewhat minute and irregular in design, deep in colour, with occasional discords of tones, but they recommend themselves by being so strongly made that it is almost impossible to wear them out. They are generally small, being woven inside their tents by the women.

In Northern Persia Turcoman carpets—the most adaptable of all for European houses—are seldom to be found now, as they are generally bought up for Russia. Dark red, warm and extremely soft is the striking note in these carpets, and the design is quite sedate.

Carpets, except the cheaper ones, are seldom sold in the bazaars nowadays. They are purchased on the looms. The best ones are only made to order. There are, of course, a few rug shops, and occasionally an old carpet finds its way to a second-hand shop in the bazaar.

Next in attraction to carpets come the jewellers' shops. The goldsmiths' and silversmiths' shops are not very numerous in the bazaars, nor, when we come to examine the work carefully, do they have anything really worth buying. The work is on good gold or silver of pure quality, but, with few exceptions, is generally clumsy in design and heavily executed. Figures are attempted, with most inartistic results, on silver cases and boxes. The frontage of a goldsmith's shop has no great variety of articles. Bracelets, rings, necklaces, tea and coffee pots, stands for coffee cups, and enamelled pipe heads; a silver kafian or two, an old cigar-box full of turquoise, and another full of other precious stones—or, rather, imitations of precious stones—a little tray with forgeries of ancient coins; that is about all. Pearls and diamonds and really valuable stones are usually concealed in neat paper parcels carried on the person by the jeweller and produced on the demand of customers.

The swordmaker and gunsmith displays many daggers and blades of local make and a great number of obsolete Belgian and Russian revolvers; also a good many Martini and Snider rifles, which have found their way here from India. Occasionally a good modern pistol or gun is to be seen. Good rifles or revolvers find a prompt sale in Persia at enormous figures. Nearly every man in the country carries a rifle. Had I chosen, I could have sold my rifles and revolvers twenty times over when in Persia, the sums offered me for them being two or three times what I had paid for them myself. But my rifles had been very faithful companions to me; one, a 256- Mannlicher, had been twice in Tibet; the other, a 30-30 take-down Winchester, had accompanied me through the Chinese campaign, and I would accept no sum for them.

One is carried back a few score of years on seeing the old rings for carrying gun-caps, and also gunpowder flasks, and even old picturesque flintlocks and matchlocks; but still, taking things all round, it is rather interesting to note that there is a considerable number of men in Iran who are well-armed with serviceable cartridge rifles, which they can use with accuracy. Cartridge rifles are at a great premium, and although their importation is not allowed, they have found their way in considerable quantities from all sides, but principally, they tell me, from India, *via* the Gulf.

One of the notes of the bazaar is that in almost every shop one sees a cage or two with humming-birds. In the morning and evening a male member of the family takes the cage and birds out for a walk in the air and sun, for the dulness and darkness of the bazaar, although considered sufficiently good for Persians themselves, is not regarded conducive to sound health and happiness for their pets.

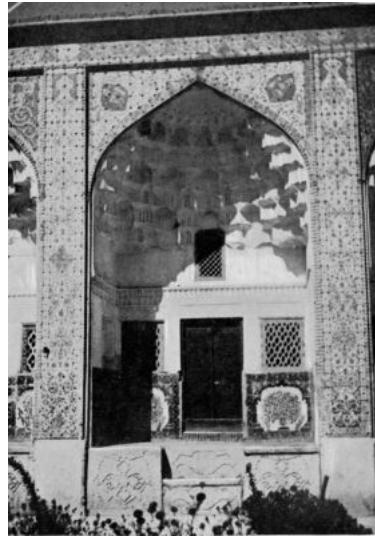
CHAPTER XXXII

The Grand Avenue of Isfahan—The Madrassah—Silver gates—The dome—The Palace—The hall of forty columns—Ornamentations—The picture hall—Interesting paintings—Their artistic merit—Nasr-ed-din Shah's portrait—The ceiling—The quivering minarets.

THE grand Avenue of Isfahan, much worn and out of repair, and having several lines of trees along its entire length of half a mile or so down to the river, is one of the sights of the ancient capital of Persia.

About half-way down the Avenue the famous Madrassah is to be found. It has a massive, handsome silver gate, in a somewhat dilapidated condition at present, and showing evident marks of thieving enterprise. At the entrance stand fluted, tiled columns, with alabaster bases, in the shape of vases some ten feet in height, while a frieze of beautiful blue tiles with inscriptions from the Koran, and other ornamentalations, are to be admired, even in their mutilated condition, on tiles now sadly tumbling down.

So much for the exterior. Inside, the place bears ample testimony to former grandeur and splendour, but at present hopeless decay is rampant here as everywhere else in Persia. The Madrassah is attributed to Shah Sultan Hussein, the founder of the Shrine at Kum, and some magnificent bits of this great work yet remain. One can gaze at the beautiful dome, of a superb delicate greenish tint, surmounted by a huge knob supposed to be of solid gold, and at the two most delightful minarets, full of grace in their lines and delicately refined in colour, with lattice work at their summit.



HANDSOME DOORWAY IN THE MADRASSAH, ISFAHAN.

In the courts and gardens are some fine old trees, amid a lot of uncouth vegetation, while grass sprouts out between the slabs of stone on the paths and wherever it should not be; the walls all round, however, are magnificent, being built of large green tiles with ornamentations of graceful curves and the favourite leaf pattern. In other places white ornamentations, principally curves and yellow circles, are to be noticed on dark blue tiles. In some of the courts very handsome tiles with flower patterns are still in good preservation.

There are in the college 160 rooms for students to board and lodge. The buildings have two storeys and nearly all have tiled fronts, less elaborate than the minarets and dome, but quite pretty, with quaint white verandahs. When I visited the place there were only some fifty students, of all ages, from children to old men. Much time is devoted by them to theological studies and some smattering of geography and history.

One cannot leave Isfahan without visiting the old Palace.

In a garden formerly beautiful but semi-barren and untidy now, on a pavement of slabs which are no longer on the level with one another, stands the Palace of the Twenty Columns, called of "the forty columns," probably because the twenty existing ones are reflected as in a mirror in the long rectangular tank of water extending between this palace and the present dwelling of H. E. Zil-es-Sultan, Governor of Isfahan. Distance lends much enchantment to everything in Persia, and such is the case even in this palace, probably the most tawdrily gorgeous structure in north-west Persia.

The Palace is divided into two sections, the open throne hall and the picture hall behind it. The twenty octagonal columns of the open-air hall were once inlaid with Venetian mirrors, and still display bases of four grinning lions carved in stone. But, on getting near them, one finds that the bases are chipped off and damaged, the glass almost all gone, and the foundation of the columns only remains, painted dark-red. The lower portion of the column, for some three feet, is ornamented with painted flowers, red in blue vases. The floor under the colonnade is paved with bricks, and there is a raised platform for the throne, reached by four stone steps.

There is a frieze here of graceful although conventional floral decoration with gold leaves. In the wall are two windows giving light to two now empty rooms. The end central receptacle or niche is gaudily ornamented with Venetian looking-glasses cut in small triangles, and it has a pretty ceiling with artichoke-leaf pattern capitals in an upward crescendo of triangles.

The ceiling above the upper platform is made entirely of mirrors with adornments in blue and gold and glass, representing the sky, the sun, and golden lions. Smaller suns also appear in the ornamentation of the frieze. The ceiling above the colonnade and the beams between the columns are richly ornamented in blue, grey, red, and gold. This ceiling is divided into fifteen rectangles, the central panel having a geometrical pattern of considerable beauty, in which, as indeed throughout, the figure of the sun is prominent.

The inner hall must have been a magnificent room in its more flourishing days. It is now used as a storeroom for banners, furniture, swords, and spears, piled everywhere on the floor and against the walls. One cannot see very well what the lower portion of the walls is like, owing to the quantity of things amassed all round, and so covered with dust as not to invite removal or even touch; but there seems to be a frieze nine feet high with elaborate blue vases on which the artist called into life gold flowers and graceful leaves.

The large paintings are of considerable interest apart from their historical value. In the centre, facing the entrance door, we detect Nadir Shah, the Napoleon of Persia, the leader of 80,000 men through Khorassan, Sistan, Kandahar and Cabul. He is said to have crossed from Afghanistan through the Khyber Pass to Peshawar, and from there to Delhi, where his presence led to a scene of loot and carnage. But to him was certainly due the extension of the Persian boundary to the Indus towards the East and to the Oxus on the North. In the picture he is represented on horseback with a great following of elephants and turbaned figures.

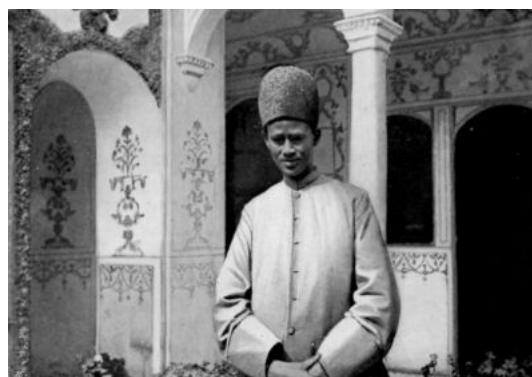
To the right we have a fight, in which Shah Ismail, who became Shah of Persia in 1499, is the hero, and a crowd of Bokhara warriors and Afghans the secondary figures. Evidently the painting is to commemorate the great successes obtained by Ismail in Khorassan, Samarkand and Tashkend.

The third is a more peaceful scene—a Bokhara dancing girl performing before Shah Tamasp, eldest of four sons of Ismail and successor to his throne. The Shah is represented entertaining the Indian Emperor Humaiyun in 1543. The lower portion of this picture is in good preservation, but the upper part has been patched up with hideous ornamentations of birds and flowers on red ground.

Over the door Shah Ismail, wearing a white turban, is represented riding a white horse and carrying a good supply of arrows. The Shah is in the act of killing a foe, and the painting probably represents one of his heroic deeds at the battle of Khoi against Salim.

To the right of the door there is a picture of dancing and feasting, with Shah Abbas offering drink in sign of friendship to Abdul Mohmek Khan Osbek.

Finally, to the left of the front door we have pictorially the most pleasing of the whole series, another scene of feasting, with the youthful figure of Shah Abbas II. (died 1668), a man of great pluck, but unfortunately given to drunkenness and licentious living, which developed brutal qualities in him. It was he who blinded many of his relations by placing red-hot irons in front of their eyes. Considering this too lenient a punishment he ordered their eyes to be extracted altogether. We see him now, sitting upon his knees, garbed in a red tunic and turban. In the foreground a most graceful dancing-girl, in red and green robes, with a peculiar waistband, and flying locks of hair. The artist has very faithfully depicted the voluptuous twist of her waist, much appreciated by Persians in dancing, and he has also managed to infuse considerable character into the musicians, the guitar man and the followers of the Shah to the left of the picture, as one looks at it, and the tambourine figure to the right. Fruit and other refreshments lie in profusion in vessels on the floor, elaborately painted. This picture is rectangular, and is probably not only the most artistic but the best preserved of the lot.



ONE OF ZIL-ES-SULTAN'S EUNUCHS.



THE "HALL OF THE FORTY COLUMNS," ISFAHAN.

Great labour and patience in working out details have been the aim of the artists of all these pictures, rather than true effects of nature, and the faces, hands, and poses are, of course, as in most Persian paintings, conventionalized and absolutely regardless of proportion, perspective, fore-shortening or atmospherical influence or action—generally called aerial perspective. The objection, common in nearly all countries, England included, to shadows on the faces is intensified a thousand-fold in Persian paintings, and handicaps the artist to no mean degree in his attempts to give relief to his figures. Moreover, the manipulation and concentration of light, and the art of composing a picture are not understood in old Persian paintings, and the result is that it is most difficult to see a picture as an *ensemble*. The eye roams all over the painting, attracted here by a patch of brilliant yellow, there by another equally vivacious red, here by some bright detail, there by something else; and like so many ghosts in a haunted room peep out the huge, black, almond-shaped eyes, black-bearded heads, all over the picture, standing like prominent patches out of the plane they are painted on.

The pictures are, nevertheless, extremely interesting, and from a Persian's standpoint magnificently painted. Such is not the case with the modern and shocking portrait of Nasr-ed-din Shah, painted in

the best oil colours in European style, his Majesty wearing a gaudy uniform with great wealth of gold and diamonds. This would be a bad painting anywhere in Persia or Europe.

The ceiling of this hall is really superb. It has three domes, the centre one more lofty than the two side ones. The higher dome is gilt, and is most gracefully ornamented with a refined leaf pattern and twelve gold stars, while the other two cupolas are blue with a similar leaf ornamentation in gold. There is much quaint irregularity in the geometrical design of the corners, shaped like a kite of prettily-arranged gold, blue and green, while other corners are red and light blue, with the sides of green and gold of most delicate tones. These are quite a violent contrast to the extravagant flaming red patches directly over the paintings.

The hall is lighted by three windows at each end near the lower arch of the side domes, and three further double windows immediately under them. There is one main entrance and three exits (one large and two small) towards the throne colonnade.

Through narrow lanes, along ditches of dirty water, or between high mud walls, one comes six miles to the west of Isfahan to one of the most curious sights of Persia,—the quivering minarets above the shrine and tomb of a saint. These towers, according to Persians, are at least eight centuries old.

Enclosed in a rectangular wall is the high sacred domed tomb, and on either side of the pointed arch of the Mesjid rise towards the sky the two column-like minarets, with quadrangular bases. A spiral staircase inside each minaret, just wide enough to let a man through, conveys one to the top, wherein four small windows are to be found. By seizing the wall at one of the apertures and shaking it violently an unpleasant oscillation can be started, and continues of its own accord, the minaret diverging from the perpendicular as much as two inches on either side. Presently the second minaret begins to vibrate also in uniformity with the first, and the vibration can be felt along the front roof-platform between the two minarets, but not in other parts of the structure. A large crack by the side of one of the minarets which is said to have existed from time immemorial foretells that some day or other minarets and front wall will come down, but it certainly speaks well for the elasticity of minarets of 800 years ago that they have stood up quivering so long.

The minarets are not very high, some thirty-five feet above the roof of the Mesjid, or about seventy-five feet from the ground. The whole structure, of bricks and mud, is—barring the dangerous crack—still in good preservation. On the outside, the minarets are tiled in a graceful, geometrical transverse pattern of dark and light blue.

A visit to the sacred shrine of the quivering minarets has miraculous powers—say the Persians—of curing all diseases or protecting one against them, hence the pilgrimage of a great number of natives afflicted with all sorts of complaints. Beggars in swarms are at the entrance waiting, like hungry mosquitoes, to pounce upon the casual visitor or customary pleasure-seeker of Isfahan, for whom this spot is a favourite resort.

CHAPTER XXXIII

Isfahan the commercial heart of Persia—Dangers of maps in argument—Bandar Abbas—The possibility of a Russian railway to Bandar Abbas—Bandar Abbas as a harbour—The caravan road to Bandar Abbas—Rates of transport—Trade—British and Russian influence—Shipping—A Russian line of steamers—Customs under Belgian officials—Lingah—Its exports and imports.

ISFAHAN is for England the most important city, politically and commercially, in Western Persia. It is the central point from which roads radiate to all parts of the Shah's Empire. It is the commercial heart, as it were, of Persia, and the future preponderance of Russian or British influence in Isfahan will settle the balance in favour of one or the other of the two countries and the eventual preponderance in the whole of Western Iran.

Khorassan and Sistan stand on quite a different footing, being severed from the West by the great Salt Desert, and must be set apart for the moment and dealt with specially.



THE QUIVERING MINARETS NEAR ISFAHAN.

A reliable map ought to be consulted in order to understand the question properly, but it should be remembered that it is ever dangerous to base arguments on maps alone in discussing either political or commercial matters. Worse still is the case when astoundingly incorrect maps such as are generally manufactured in England are in the hands of people unfamiliar with the real topography and resources of a country.

To those who have travelled it is quite extraordinary what an appalling mass of nonsensical rubbish can be supplied to the public by politicians, by newspaper penny-a-liners, and by home royal geographo-parasites at large, who base their arguments on such unsteady foundation. It is quite sufficient for some people to open an atlas and place their fingers on a surface of cobalt blue paint in order to select strategical harbours, point out roads upon which foreign armies can invade India,

trade routes which ought to be adopted in preference to others, and so on, regardless of sea-depth, currents, winds, shelter, and climatic conditions. In the case of roads for invading armies, such small trifles as hundreds of miles of desert, impassable mountain ranges, lack of water, and no fuel, are never considered! These are only small trifles that do not signify—as they are not marked on the maps—the special fancy of the cartographer for larger or smaller type in the nomenclature making cities and villages more or less important to the student, or the excess of ink upon one river course rather than another, according to the cartographer's humour, making that river quite navigable, notwithstanding that in reality there may not be a river nor a city nor village at all. We have flaming examples of this in our Government maps of Persia.

I myself have had an amusing controversy in some of the London leading papers with no less a person than the Secretary of a prominent Geographical Society, who assured the public that certain well-known peaks did not exist because he could not find them (they happened to be there all the same) on his map!

Such other trifles as the connecting of lakes by imaginary rivers to maintain the reputation of a scientific impostor, or the building of accurate maps (*sic*) from badly-taken photographs—the direction of which was not even recorded by the distinguished photographers—are frauds too commonly perpetrated on the innocent public by certain so-called scientific societies, to be here referred to. Although these frauds are treated lightly, the harm they do to those who take them seriously and to the public at large, who are always ready blindly to follow anybody with sufficient bounce, is enormous.

Without going into minor details, let us take the burning question of the fast-expanding Russian influence in the south of Persia. We are assured that Russia wishes an outlet in the Persian Gulf, and suspicions are strong that her eye is set on Bandar Abbas. On the map it certainly appears a most heavenly spot for a harbour, and we hear from scribblers that it can be made into a strong naval base and turned into a formidable position. The trade from Meshed and Khorassan and Teheran, Isfahan, Yezd, and Kerman is with equal theoretical facility switched on to this place. Even allowing that Russia should obtain a concession of this place—a most unlikely thing to be asked for or conceded while Persia remains an independent country—matters would not be as simple for Russia as the man in the street takes them to be.

It would first of all be necessary to construct a railway connecting the Trans-Caspian line with Bandar Abbas, a matter of enormous expense and difficulty, and likely enough never to be a profitable financial enterprise. The political importance is dubious. A long railway line unguarded in a foreign country could but be of little practical value. It must be remembered that Persia is a very thinly populated country, with vast tracts of land, such as the Salt Desert, almost absolutely uninhabited, and where the construction of such a railway would involve serious difficulties, owing to the lack of water for several months of the year, intense heat, shifting sands, and in some parts sudden inundations during the short rainy season.

Moreover, Bandar Abbas itself, although ideally situated on the maps, is far from being an ideal harbour. The water is shallow, and there is no safe shelter; the heat unbearable and unhealthy. At enormous expense, of course, this spot, like almost any other spot on any coast, could be turned into a fair artificial harbour. The native town itself—if it can be honoured with such a name—consists of a few miserable mud houses, with streets in which one sinks in filth and mud. The inhabitants are the most miserable and worst ruffians in Persia, together with some Hindoos. There is a European community of less than half-a-dozen souls.

The *British India* and other coasting steamers touch here, and therefore this has been made the starting-point for caravans to Kerman and Yezd and Sistan *via* Bam. But for Isfahan and Teheran the more direct and shorter route *via* Bushire is selected. The caravan road from Bandar Abbas to Kerman and Yezd is extremely bad and unsafe. Several times of late the track has been blocked, and caravans robbed. During 1900, and since that date, the risk of travelling on the road seems to have increased, and as it is useless for Persians to try and obtain protection or compensation from their own Government the traffic not only has been diverted when possible to other routes, principally Bushire, but the rates for transport of goods inland had at one time become almost prohibitive. In the summer of 1900, it cost 18 tomans (about £3 9s.) to convey 900 lbs. weight as far as Yezd, but in the autumn the charges rose to 56 tomans (about £10 13s.) or more than three times as much for the same weight of goods. Eventually the rates were brought down to 22 tomans, but only for a short time, after which they fluctuated again up to 28 tomans. It was with the greatest difficulty that loading camels could be obtained at all, owing to the deficiency of exports, and this partly accounted for the extortionate prices demanded. An English gentleman whom I met in Kerman told me that it was only at great expense and trouble that he was able to procure camels to proceed from Bandar Abbas to Kerman, and even then he had to leave all his luggage behind to follow when other animals could be obtained.

According to statistics furnished by the British Vice-Consul, the exports of 1900 were half those of 1899, the exact figures being £202,232 for 1899; £102,671 for 1900. Opium, which had had the lead by far in previous years, fell from £48,367 to £4,440. Raw cotton, however, not only held its own but rose to a value of £18,692 from £6,159 the previous year. In the years 1888, 1889, 1890, and 1891 the exports of raw cotton were abnormal, and rose to about £35,000 in 1890, the highest record during the decade from 1888 to 1897.

Large quantities of henna and opium are also exported from this spot, as it is the principal outlet of the Kerman and Yezd districts, but the trade may be said to be almost entirely in British hands at present, and Russian influence so far is infinitesimal.

We find that, next to opium, fruit and vegetables, especially dates, constitute a large part of the export, then wool, drugs and spices, salt, carpets and woollen fabrics, piece goods, silk (woven), seeds, skins and tanned leather, wheat and cereals, and cotton raw and manufactured. Perfumery—rose-water—was largely exported from 1891 to 1896. The exportation of tobacco seems to decrease, although it is now beginning to look up again a little. Dyes and colouring substances are also exported.

The value of imports is very nearly double that of the exports. Cotton goods have the lead by a long way, then come tea, and piece goods, loaf-sugar, powdered sugar, indigo, metals, wheat and cereals, spices, drugs, wool and woollen fabrics, jute fabrics, cheap cutlery, coffee, tobacco, mules, horses, donkeys, etc., in the succession enumerated.

It is pleasant to find that the shipping increases yearly at Bandar Abbas, and that, second only to Persian vessels, the number of British sailing vessels entering Bandar Abbas in 1900 was nearly double (48) of the previous year (28). Steamers were in the proportion of 101 to 64. Although in number of sailing vessels the Persians have the priority, because of the great number of small crafts, the total tonnage of the Persian vessels was 5,320 tons against 75,440 tons in 1899, and 139,164 tons in 1900 British.

Turkish steamers occasionally ply to Bandar Abbas and Muscat and also Arab small sailing crafts.

It is rather curious to note that in 1899 the imports into Bandar Abbas came entirely from India, Great Britain and France, and in a small measure from Muscat, Zanzibar, the Arab Coast, Bahrain and Persian ports, whereas the following year, 1900, the imports from India fell to less than half their previous value, from £435,261 to £204,306, and from the United Kingdom there was a diminution from £86,197 to £69,597; whereas France doubled hers in 1900 and other countries entered into competition. The Chinese Empire, curiously enough, was the strongest, to the value of £18,419, presumably with teas, and Austria-Hungary £10,509. Germany and Turkey imported to the value of some £2,174 and £2,147 respectively. Belgium £2,254, Java £7,819, Mauritius £3,564, Muscat £692, the Canaries £637, America £600, and Arabia £494. Japan contributed to the amount of £305, Sweden £273, Italy £82, and Switzerland the modest sum of £8.

A most significant point is that Russia, with all her alleged aims and designs, only contributed to the small amount of £572. Nothing was exported from Bandar Abbas to Russia. It would appear from this that at least commercially Russia's position at Bandar Abbas was not much to be feared as late as 1900. Since then a Russian line of steamers has been established from the Black Sea to the Persian Gulf ports, but I have no accurate statistics at hand. It is said not to be a financial success.

The establishment of Customs under Belgian officials in 1900 caused some trouble at first, and may have been responsible for a portion of the falling-off in trade, but it is now agreed by everybody that the system is carried on in a fair and honest manner, preferable to the extortionate fashion employed by the former speculators who farmed out the Customs.

I rather doubt whether Russia's aim is even directed towards Lingah, to the south-west of Bandar Abbas, as has been supposed by others. Although this port would afford a deeper and better anchorage and a breakwater, it has the same difficulties of approach by land from Russia as Bandar Abbas—in fact, greater ones, being further south.

Lingah is a more prosperous port than Bandar Abbas, its exports being roughly two-thirds larger than those of Bandar Abbas, and its imports one-third in excess. In value the export and import of pearls form the chief item, next come wheat and cotton. Very little tea is disembarked at Lingah, but dates and firearms were landed in considerable quantities, especially in 1897. Coffee and tobacco were more in demand here than at Bandar Abbas, and metals were largely imported. White sea-shells found their way in huge quantities to Beluchistan, where the women use them for decorating their persons. Bangles and necklaces are made with them, and neck-bands for the camels, horses and mules, as well as ornamentations on the saddle bags. With these two exceptions the imports and exports of Lingah are made up of larger quantities of articles similar to those brought to and from Bandar Abbas.

CHAPTER XXXIV

Mahommerah—Where Russia's aims are directed—Advantages of Mahommerah—
The navigation of the Karun River—Traffic—Rates on the Ahwaz-Isfahan track—
The Government's attitude—Wheat—Russian influence—Backhtiari Chiefs—Up and
down river trade—Gum—Cotton goods—Sugar—Caravan route—Steamers—
Disadvantages of a policy of drift—Russian enterprise.

So much for Bandar Abbas and Lingah. I will not touch on Bushire, too well known to English people, but Mahommerah may have a special interest to us, and also to Russia. It is rather curious to note that it has never struck the British politician nor the newspaper writer that Russia's aims, based usually on sound and practical knowledge, might be focussed on this port, which occupies the most favourable position in the Persian Gulf for Russia's purposes. Even strategically it is certainly as good as Bandar Abbas, while commercially its advantages over the latter port are a thousandfold greater.

These advantages are a navigable river, through fertile country, instead of an almost impassable, waterless desert, and a distance as the crow flies from Russian territory to Mahommerah one-third shorter than from Bandar Abbas. A railway through the most populated and richest part of Persia could easily be constructed to Ahwaz. The climate is healthy though warm.

Another most curious fact which seems almost incredible is that the British Government, through ignorance or otherwise, by a policy of drift may probably be the cause of helping Russia to reap the benefit of British enterprise on the Karun River, in the development of which a considerable amount of British capital has already been sunk. The importance, political and commercial, of continuing the navigation of the Karun River until it does become a financial success—which it is bound to be as soon as the country all round it is fully developed—is too obvious for me to write at length upon it, but it cannot be expected that a private company should bear the burden and loss entirely for the good of the mother country without any assistance from the home Government.

The British firm, who run the steamers, with much insight and praiseworthy enterprise improved the existing caravan track from Isfahan to Ahwaz on the Karun River, the point up to which the river is navigable by steamers not drawing more than four feet. They built two fine suspension bridges, one over the Karun at Godar-i-Balutak and the other, the Pul-Amarat (or Built-bridge) constructed on the side of an ancient masonry bridge. The track has thus been rendered very easy and every assistance was offered to caravans, while a regular service of river steamers plied from Mahommerah to Ahwaz, to relieve the traffic by water. The s.s. *Blosse Lynch*, 250 tons, was sent up at first, but was too large, so the s.s. *Malamir*, 120 tons, was specially built for the Karun navigation.

Matters were very prosperous at first, until many obstacles came in the way. The road has been open to traffic some three years. The first year traffic was healthy and strong, but the second year, owing to famine in Arabistan, the traffic suddenly dropped and nothing would induce muleteers to travel by that route. Although they were offered as much as 100 (£2) to 110 krans (£2 4s.) per load from Isfahan to Ahwaz, a distance of 17 stages—277 miles—they preferred to take 70 krans (£1 9s. 2d.) to Bushire, a journey of about 30 stages, over a distance of 510 miles.

The caravan men in Persia are curious people to deal with, and it takes a very long time to imbue their minds with new ideas. In the case of the Ahwaz road it was partly conservatism and fear instigated by the Mullahs that prevented their taking loads to the steamers.

It was fully expected that the route could not pay its way for at least five years from its inauguration, and the British Government—which at that time seemed to understand the value of the undertaking—agreed to give in equal shares with the Government of India a collective guarantee against losses up to £3,000 for the first two years, then of £2,000 for five years. For some unaccountable reason the Government of India, which the scheme mostly concerned, dropped out, and the guarantee was further reduced to £1,000 payable by the home Government only. As a result of this the steamers have been run since at a considerable loss, and had it not been for the patriotism of Lynch Brothers, and the prospects to which they still cling of a successful issue, the navigation of the Karun would have already come to an untimely end.

The principal article of export of any importance was wheat, grown in enormous quantities in the fertile plains of Arabistan; and were its export legal, the export of grain would be infinitely greater than the whole of the present imports. But the Persian Government unfortunately prohibited the export of grain from Persia, nominally to allay and prevent famine in the country, in fact to enrich local governors by permitting illicit export. Consequently, the peasants could not sell their produce in the open market and had to sell it, accepting what they could get from speculators at about half the actual value. This led to the discontinuance of the cultivation of wheat. When for three years the exportation of grain was permitted, the acreage under cultivation was enormous and yielded very large returns, but as soon as the prohibition was set in force it dwindled year by year until it became approximately the fifth part of what it originally was. On the top of all this a severe drought occurred and a famine resulted.

It seems very likely that the British Government may now fall out also and stop the meagre guarantee of £1,000. This may have disastrous results, for it cannot be expected that a private firm will continue the navigation of the Karun at a great loss. This is, in a few words, what it may lead to. Should the British abandon the work already done, Russia will step in—she has had her eye upon the Karun more than upon any other spot in Persia—and reap the benefit of the money and labour that has been spent by us. In the plain of Arabistan Russian influence is not yet very far advanced, but among the Backtiaris it is spreading fast. Intrigue is rampant. The Russian agents endeavour to get the tribesmen into disgrace with the Government and they succeed to a great extent in their aim.

Isphandiar Khan, who has the title of Sirdar Assad, is the head chief of the Backtiaris, and with his cousin Sephadar keeps going the various branches of the family, but serious family squabbles are very frequent and may eventually cause division. The two above named men manage to keep all together except Hadji-Riza Kuli Khan, who is an opposing factor. He is an uncle of Isphandiar Khan, and his rancour arises from having been ousted from the chieftainship. He is said to have fallen very badly under Russian influence, and instigated his followers to rebellion, the cause being, however, put down not to family squabbles and jealousy—the true causes—but to disapproval of the new road and the influence exercised by it upon the Backtiari country.

Only about one-fifth of foreign imports into Mahommerah find their way up the Karun River. It is certainly to be regretted that no articles direct from the United Kingdom are forced up the river. The trade with India in 1900 only amounted to some £43,062 against £30,149 the previous year, France, Turkey, and Egypt being the only other importers. The total imports into Mahommerah for transhipment to Karun ports amounted to £59,194 in 1900, and showed a considerable increase on 1899.

Piece goods find their way up the river in considerable quantities. Then loaf-sugar and soft sugar are the principal articles of import; dates, iron, and treacle come next; while various metals, tea and matches come last.

In regard to local commerce the river trade for 1900 was £100,437, showing an increase of £37,449 upon the trade of 1899. This ought to be regarded as satisfactory, considering the slowness of Oriental races in moving from their old grooves.

The down river trade falls very short of the up river commerce, and consists mostly of wheat, oil seeds, opium, wool, gum, flour, beans, cotton, rice, tobacco, piece goods, glue. In 1900 the decrease in the carriage of wheat was enormous, and also the trade in oil seeds. Although gum was carried down stream in much larger quantities, owing to the yield being unusually abundant, the price obtained was very poor, owing to the falling London market. Gum Tragacanth was conveyed principally by the Isfahan-Ahwaz route. Notwithstanding all this there was an increase of £17,000 in 1900 over the trade of 1899, which shows that the route is nevertheless progressing and is worth cultivating.

Cotton goods, which are reimported from India mostly by Parsee and Jewish firms, originally come from Manchester and are in great demand. They consist of grey shirtings, prints (soft finish), lappets, imitation Turkey red, Tanjibs and jaconets. Marseilles beetroot sugar is holding its own against other cheaper sugars imported lately and finds its way to Isfahan by the Ahwaz road.

Caravans usually employ twenty days on the Ahwaz-Isfahan journey, but the distance can easily be covered in fifteen days and even less. A fortnightly steamer is run by the Euphratis and Tigris Steam Navigation Company to Ahwaz.

Mahommerah exports chiefly to India, then to Turkey, the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, the Persian Gulf ports, Egypt and France. In 1900 the exports were to the value of £115,359. The imports were similar to those of Bandar Abbas, viz.:—cotton goods, sugar, coffee, silk, iron, tea, manufactured metal, thread, spices, etc. They amounted to an aggregate sum of £281,570 in 1900, against £202,492 in 1899.[\[4\]](#)

If I have gone into details it is to show the mistake made by the British Government in letting such a valuable position, of absolute vital importance to our interest, drift slowly but surely into Russian hands. Russia's aims in the Gulf are at present concentrated on the Karun River; our movements are closely watched, and nothing could be more probable than, that if we abandon the Karun, Russia will at once fill our place and turn the whole business into a formidable success.

The Russian Government have now granted a subsidy of £5,000 per round voyage to the Russian Steam Navigation to run three steamers a year from Odessa to Bussorah, touching at all the principal ports of the Persian Gulf. The s.s. *Kornilof* made two voyages in 1901, arriving in Bussorah in April and November. On her first voyage she landed most of her cargo in Bushire, and only conveyed 8,000 cases of petroleum and a quantity of wood for date boxes; but on her second journey 16,500 cases of petroleum were landed at Bussorah and a further supply of wood, besides a great number of samples of Russian products, such as flour, sugar and matches. On the second return journey the *Kornilof* took back to Odessa freight for two thousand pounds from Bussorah, principally dates, a cargo which had been previously carried by British steamers to Port Said and then transhipped for the Black Sea.

The appearance of the Russian boats excited considerable interest among the natives and merchants, both British and indigenous. Comments are superfluous on the grant given by the Russian Government to further Russian trade, and the wavering attitude of the British Government in safeguarding interests already acquired.

FOOTNOTES:

[4] See Diplomatic and Consular Reports, Trade of Persian Gulf for the year 1900. Foreign Office. H.M. Stationery Office.

CHAPTER XXXV

The British Consul-General in Isfahan—Russia's influence in Southern Persia—H.R.H. Zil-es-Sultan—Departure for Yezd—Pigeon towers—A Persian telegraph line—Ghiavaz—Characteristics of the scenery—A village in ruins—Types—Saigsi—Mud dunes—Mirage—A reservoir—Kanats—Scarcity of fodder.

I ONLY halted a few days in Isfahan, during which time I was the guest of Mr. Preece, the British Consul-General. Mr. Preece's hospitality and popularity are proverbial among Europeans and natives all over Persia. A step in the right direction was taken by the British Government in making a Consulate-General in Isfahan, and another good step was that of furnishing the Consulate with a guard of mounted Indian soldiers. Prestige and outward show go much together in Persia, and no matter to what extent one's private feelings may rebel at the idea, we must make a display, I suppose.

We have in Mr. Preece a very able and intellectual officer; a man who understands the Persians thoroughly, and a gentleman of uncommon tact and kindness. His artistic taste has served him well, so that the Consulate and grounds have been rendered most comfortable and delightful, and the collections of carpets and silver which he has made during his many years' residence in Persia are very interesting.

It is true that Russian influence is spreading fast towards the south, and that the establishment of a Russian Consulate in Isfahan, with its guard of Cossacks, has made considerable impression on the population, but no doubt Mr. Preece will be able to maintain British prestige high, if the Government at home show grit and enable him to do so.

It is most important, I think, to come to some sound conclusion on the policy to be followed towards Russia in Persia, either to check her advance immediately and firmly, or to come to some satisfactory agreement with her so that her interests and ours may not altogether clash; but it cannot be impressed too often upon our minds that our present policy of drift and wavering is most disastrous to our interests. We have lost Northern Persia. Southern Persia will soon slip from our grip unless we pull up soon and open our eyes wide to what is happening.

We place too much reliance on the fact that Zil-es-Sultan, the Shah's brother and now Governor of Isfahan, was once extremely pro-British. We have a way of getting ideas into our heads and nothing will drive them out again, but we forget that things and people change in Persia as everywhere else, and what was accurate fifteen years ago may not be so now. Also it must be remembered that Zil-es-Sultan, although in high power, does not occupy the same high position politically as before the late Shah's death. He and his family are kept under strict control of the Shah, and any pro-English ideas which they may still have are discouraged, if not promptly eradicated. His Highness's sons have been forbidden to be educated in Europe or to travel abroad, although a visit to Russia only might be allowed. Beyond the secondary power of a High Governor, Zil-es-Sultan has no other influence, and has to conform to superior orders. He is now no longer very young, and his popularity, although still very great, cannot be said to be on the increase.



H. R. H. ZIL-ES-SULTAN, Governor of Isfahan.

While in Isfahan I had an audience of his Highness. One could not help being struck at first glance by the powerful countenance of the Prince, and the mixture of pride and worry plainly depicted on his face. He spoke very intelligently but was most guarded in his speech. One of his sons Baharam Mirza—a wonderfully clever young man, who spoke French and English fluently although he had never been out of Persia—interpreted. I was much impressed by the kindness of the Zil-es-Sultan towards his children, and in return by the intense respect, almost fear, of these towards their father. After a pleasant visit and the usual compliments and refreshments, coffee was brought, the polite signal that the audience should come to a close. The Prince accompanied the Consul and myself to the door of the room—a most unusual compliment.

There were many soldiers, and servants and attendants with silver-topped maces who escorted us out of the grounds, where we found the Consular guard again, and returned to the Consulate.

Two days later I departed for Yezd. There is no high road between the two cities; only a mere track. No postal service and relays of horses are stationed on the track, but, by giving notice some days previous to one's departure, horses can be sent out ahead from Isfahan to various stages of the journey, until the Kashan-Nain-Yezd road is met, on which post horses can again be obtained at the Chappar Khanas. This, however, involved so much uncertainty and exorbitant expense that I preferred to make up my own caravan of mules, the first part of the journey being rather hilly.

On leaving Isfahan there are mountains to the south, the Urchin range, and also to the east, very rugged and with sharply defined edges. To the north-east stand distant elevations, but nothing can be seen due north. We go through a great many ruins on leaving the city, and here, too, as in other cities of Persia, one is once more struck by the unimportant appearance of the city from a little distance off. The green dome of the Mosque, and four minarets are seen rising on the north-east, five more slender minarets like factory chimneys—one extremely high—then everything else the colour of mud.

The traffic near the city is great. Hundreds of donkeys and mules toddle along both towards and away from the city gate. The dust is appalling. There is nothing more tantalizing than the long stretches of uninteresting country to be traversed in Persia, where, much as one tries, there is nothing to rest one's eye upon; so it is with great relief—almost joy—that we come now to something new in the scenery, in the shape of architecture—a great number of most peculiar towers.



AGRICULTURE AND PIGEON TOWERS NEAR ISFAHAN.

These are the pigeon towers—a great institution in Central Persia. They are cylindrical in shape, with castellated top, and are solidly built with massive walls. They stand no less than thirty to forty feet in height, and possess a central well in which the guano is collected—the object for which the towers are erected. A quadrangular house on the top, and innumerable small cells, where pigeons lay their eggs and breed their young, are constructed all round the tower. These towers are quite formidable looking structures, and are so numerous, particularly in the neighbourhood of Isfahan, as to give the country quite a strongly fortified appearance. The guano is removed once a year. After passing Khorasgan, at Ghiavaz—a small village—one could count as many as twenty-four of these pigeon houses.

Some amusement could be got from the way the Persian telegraph line had been laid between Isfahan and Yezd, *via* Nain. There were no two poles of the same height or shape; some were five or six feet long, others ten or fifteen;—some were straight, some crooked; some of most irregular knobby shapes. As to the wire, when it did happen to be supported on the pole it was not fastened to

an insulator, as one would expect, but merely rested on a nail, or in an indentation in the wood. For hundreds of yards at a time the wire lay on the ground, and the poles rested by its side or across it. Telegrams sent by these Persian lines, I was told, take several days to reach their destination, if they ever do reach at all; and are usually entrusted for conveyance, not to the wire, but to caravan men happening to travel in that particular direction, or to messengers specially despatched from one city to the other.

Some two farsakhs from Isfahan we went through a passage where the hills nearly meet, after which we entered a flat plain, barren and ugly. In the distance to the south-east lay a line of blackish trees, and another in front of us in the direction we were travelling, due east. Then we saw another bunch of pigeon towers.

Leaving behind the hills nearer to us to the north-west, west, and south-west, and the more distant and most fantastically shaped range to the south, my mules gradually descend into the plain. For an angle of 40° from east to S.S.E. no hills are visible to the naked eye, but there is a long range of comparatively low hills encircling us from N.N.W. to S.S.E. and N.E. of the observer, the highest points being at 80° (almost N.E.E.). To the north we have a long line of *kanats*.

Following the drunken row of telegraph poles we arrive at Gullahbad (Gulnabad)—a village in ruins. From this point for some distance the soil is covered with a deposit of salt, giving the appearance of a snow-clad landscape, in sharp contrast with the terrific heat prevailing at the time. This road is impassable during the rainy weather. As one nears the hills to the N.E. tufts of grass of an anaemic green cover the ground (altitude 5,250 feet).

Under a scorching sun we reached Saigsi (8 farsakhs from Isfahan) at six o'clock in the afternoon, and put up in the large caravanserai with two rooms up stairs and ten down below around the courtyard. The difference in the behaviour of the natives upon roads on which Europeans do not frequently travel could be detected at once here. One met with the greatest civility and simplicity of manner and, above all, honesty, which one seldom finds where European visitors are more common.

There are few countries where the facial types vary more than in Persia. The individuals of nearly each town, each village, have peculiar characteristics of their own. At Saigsi, for instance, only 32 miles from Isfahan, we find an absolutely different type of head, with abnormally large mouth and widely-expanded nostrils, the eyes wide apart, and the brow overhanging. The latter may be caused by the constant brilliant refraction of the white soil in the glare of the sun (altitude of Saigsi 5,100 feet).

About four miles east of Saigsi and north of the track we come across five curious parallel lines of mud-heaps or dunes stretching from north to south. Each of these heaps is precisely where there is a gap in the mountain range to the north of it, and each has the appearance of having been gradually deposited there by a current passing through these gaps when the whole of this plain was the sea-bottom. These mud heaps are flat-topped and vary from 20 to 40 feet in height, the central row of all being the highest of the series. This is a grand place for wonderful effects of mirage all round us. To the W. spreads a beautiful lake in the depression of the plain—as complete an optical deception as it is possible to conceive, for in reality there is no lake at all.[‡]

Water is not at all plentiful here. One finds a reservoir made for caravans along this track. It is a tank 25 feet by 10 feet sunk deep into the ground and roofed over with a vault. The water is sent to it by means of a channel from the small village of Vartan north of it.

We gradually rise to 5,550 feet and again we have before us another beautiful effect of mirage in the shape of a magnificent lake with a village and cluster of trees apparently suspended in the air. My caravan man assures me that the village, which appears quite close by, is many miles off.

Long rows of *kanats*, ancient and modern, to the south-east warn us of the approach of a small town, and on the road plenty of skeletons of camels, donkeys, and mules may be seen. Fodder is very scarce upon this track, and many animals have to die of starvation. Also animals caught here during the rains cannot proceed in the sinking soft ground, and eventually die.

CHAPTER XXXVI

Khupah—Sunken well—Caravanserai—Night marching—Kudeshk—The Fishark and Sara ranges—Lhas—The pass—Whirlwinds—Robbers—Fezahbad—The dangers of a telegraph wire—An accident—Six villages—Deposits of sand and gravel—Bambis—The people—Mosquitoes—A Persian house—Weaving loom—Type of natives—Clothing—Sayids.

EARLY in the afternoon Khupah (altitude 5,920 feet) was reached, with its very large and dirty caravanserai to the west, just outside the town wall. From the roof—the only clean part of the hostelry—one obtains a good panoramic view of the town. It is built in a most irregular shape, and is encircled by a castellated mud wall with round turrets. There is a humble dome of a mosque rising somewhat higher than all the other little domes above each dwelling.

Feeble attempts at raising a bazaar have been made on different sites in the town, where bits of arcades have been erected, but there are no signs about the place of a flourishing industry or trade. The majority of houses, especially in the northern part of the city, are in ruins. The principal thoroughfare is picturesque enough, and on the occasion of my visit looked particularly attractive to me, with its huge trays of delicious grapes. They were most refreshing to eat in the terrific heat of the day. One peculiarity of the place is that most doorways of houses are sunk—generally from one to three feet—below the level of the street.

Between the caravanserai and the city is a sunken well with flat roof and four ventilating shafts to keep the water cool. Further away, are seven more buildings—probably dead-houses—and a garden. The little range north of the city is quite low, and has in front of it a pyramidal dune—a similar deposit to those we have already noticed to the north-west in the morning on our march to this place, but much higher.

South of the town many trees and verdant gardens are visible, and to the West the immense stretch of flat—some sixty miles of it that we had travelled over from Isfahan.

For want of a better amusement I sat on the roof to watch the sunset, while Sadek cooked my dinner. The nearer hills, of a bright cobalt blue, faded into a light grey in the distance, the sky shone in a warm cadmium yellow, and beneath stretched the plain, of a dark-brown bluish colour, uninterrupted for miles and miles, were it not for one or two tumbled-down huts in the immediate foreground, and a long, snake-like track winding its way across the expanse until it lost itself in the dim distance.

Directly below, in the courtyard of the caravanserai, four camels squatted round a cloth on which was served straw mixed with cotton seeds, that gave flavour to their meal. The camels slowly ground their food, moving their lower jaws sideways from right to left, instead of up and down as is usual in most other animals; and some of the caravan men placidly smoked their kilians, while others packed up their bundles to make ready for their departure as soon as the moon should rise. In another corner of the courtyard my own caravan man groomed the mules, and around a big flame a little further off a crowd of admiring natives gazed open-mouthed at Sadek boiling a chicken and vegetables for my special benefit.

We were to make a night march, as the heat of the day was too great to travel in. At three in the morning, yawning and stretching our limbs when we were roused by the charvadar.^[5] we got on the mules and made our departure. The cold was intense, and the wind blowing with all its might from the west. Six miles off we passed Kamalbek, then six miles further the large village of Moshkianuh in ruins, with a few green trees near it.

The plain on which we are travelling rises gently up to the village of Kudeshk at the foot of the mountain (altitude 6,750 feet). We ascend gradually between hills to the north and south and find ourselves in another flat valley, about three quarters of a mile broad and one mile and a half long. (Altitude 7,200 feet.) We are surrounded by hills, and find two villages, one to the east, the other to the west of the valley. The latter possesses buildings with masonry walls instead of the usual mud ones, and also masonry enclosures round wheat-fields and fruit-tree groves.

We continue to rise until the highest point of the plain is reached, 7,620 feet. Two or three smaller hamlets are found in the centre of the plain.

A second basin is found on proceeding east, with here and there miserable clusters of trees; otherwise everything is as barren as barren could be. On the reddish hills the rocky portion shows through at the summit only, whereas the bases are enveloped in a covering of sand and salt. To the north the Fishark and Sara mountain range extends in a general direction of N.W. to S.E., and its formation is quite interesting. Due north of us the eye is attracted by a peculiar hill, a double cone, two pointed, and much redder in colour than the hills near it.

On nearing the mountains many small villages appear. Yazih village has a solid stone wall round it. Wheat is cultivated by the natives, good water being obtainable here in small but limpid streams. Then we have the old village of Lhas, now rejoicing in the new name of Mazemullahmat, and near it, Fezahbad, where I halted.

I strolled in the afternoon a mile from the latter village to the pass, 8,000 feet above sea level. Directly in front of the pass (at 110° bearings magnetic) stands a high peak, and beyond it to the right of the observer (at 140° b.m.) another and higher summit.

We leave behind to the W.N.W. the high Sara mountain range, no peaks of which, I estimated, rose above 10,000 feet. W.N.W. (at 280° b.m.) is a most curious conical hill, standing isolated and very high above the plain.

Among the most common sights of these parts are the whirlwinds—the *tourbillons*,—each revolving with terrific rapidity round its own axis and raising to the sky a cylindrical column of dust. They further move along the country in a spasmodic manner, but never so fast that they cannot be avoided. The diameter of the wind columns I observed by the dust carried with it, varied from 3 feet to 20 feet.

The mountains we are travelling on are said to be somewhat unsafe, the villagers being given to attacking caravans, and robber bands coming here for shelter when it becomes unsafe for them to be on the Kashan-Yezd high road. In fact, while resting in the house of Haji-Mulla Ahmed at Fezahbad, a curious lot of men appeared, who, notwithstanding the remonstrances of Sadek and Haji, broke into the house in a most boisterous manner, demanding food of the landlord. They were armed with revolvers and old Martini rifles, and had plenty of cartridges about their persons. They seemed quite taken aback to find a European inside the room. They changed their attitude at once, and became quite polite.

I entertained them to tea, of which they drank gallons. I cannot say that I was particularly charmed with their faces, but their manner was certainly most courteous. They showed me their rifles—English Martinis with additional gold ornamentations of lion and sun, such as one sees in thousands all over Persia. I asked them where they got them from. They said they came from the Persian Gulf.

Haji Mulla Ahmed, the founder of the village, was a fine old fellow with a kindly face, eyes shining like beads under an overhanging brow, and a crimson beard dyed with henna. He appeared rather sulky at this unwonted visit, and more sulky still later when the visitors left me and he had to provide food for them. He said that the robbers frequently called upon him, and were a great drain on his supplies.

When we left at 1.45 A.M. to go across the pass, he advised Sadek and myself to load our rifles and keep a sharp look-out. As I had already measured the altitude of the pass in the afternoon I had no particular object in keeping awake, so I slung the rifle to my saddle and dozed off on my mule as we were slowly winding our way up to the summit. The long night marches were so dreary and the sound of the mules' bells so monotonous that it was most difficult to keep awake. One gradually learns to balance one's self quite well on the saddle while asleep, and it does shorten the long hours of the night very considerably. Occasionally one wakes up abruptly with a jolt, and one fancies that one is just about to tumble over, but although I suppose I must have ridden in my life hundreds of miles while asleep on the saddle, I have never once had a fall in the natural course of affairs. The animals, too, are generally so intelligent that they do for one the balancing required and manage to keep under the rider.

On that particular night I was extremely sleepy. I opened my eyes for a second when we reached the pass and began to descend on the other side, but sleepiness overcame me again. I was riding the first mule in the caravan. Unexpectedly I received a fearful blow in the face, and I was very nearly torn off the saddle. There was a curious metallic buzzing resounding in the air, and before I had time to warn those that came after, Sadek, who came next, was knocked down, and the mules, frightened at this unusual occurrence, stampeded down the steep incline. It was the telegraph wire hanging loose right across the road that had caused the accident. The road was in zig-zag, and was crossed several times by the wire which was laid more or less in a straight line. But this, of course, I did not know, so a few minutes later, before we had time to bring the runaway mules to a stop, the wire, unseen, was again met with a foot or so above the ground. It caught the mules on the legs, and as they were tied to one another, and were carried on by the impetus of the pace at which we were going, all the animals tumbled down one on the top of the other in a heap. The packs got mercilessly undone, and it took us the best part of an hour to disentangle all and get things straight again.

The cold was bitter. Some two miles East of the pass there were two roads, one leading to Nain, the other to Nao Gombes. We took the latter and shorter route, and with some sense of relief now we left the telegraph line, which proceeds to Nain.

On the plateau east of the pass, we found six small villages, the most eastern—Eshratawat (Ishratabad)—being the largest (altitude 6,800 ft.). When the sun was about to rise we more clearly distinguished a grey, sombre, mountainous mass to the east, sharply indented at its summit, like the teeth of a gigantic saw, and ending abruptly on the northern terminus.

We had come between mountains, and some twelve miles from Fezahbad we reached Kudarz (altitude 6,580 ft.), a village situated at the foot of the range we had crossed. As the sun peeped above the mountains close by to the east a large plain disclosed itself before the observer. A long mountain range, bluish and indistinct, could just be perceived in the distance, bounding the plain to the north. Some low, semi-spherical and a few conical hills, and also a somewhat higher and rugged rocky elevation, were found on entering the plain from the west.

Oskholun village lies in the plain 16 miles from Fezahbad. At the foot of the mountains on one's right one notices a curious deposit of sand and gravel, cushion shaped, rising in a gentle incline up the mountain side to a height of 150 feet. It would be interesting to find out exactly how these accumulations have formed, and whether the wind or water or both are responsible for them.

On arriving at Bambis (altitude 5,660 ft.) Sadek was in a great state of mind to find a suitable house where we could put up, as there were no caravanserais. Several of the principal people in the town offered me their own houses, and eventually, after careful inspection, I accepted the cleanest.

Of course, in small, out-of-the-way villages no great luxury could be expected even in dwellings of well-to-do people, but after entering by a miserable door and going through a filthy passage, one came to a nice little court with an ornamental tank of somewhat fetid water. Swarms of mosquitoes rose from the floating leaves of the water plants as soon as we appeared and gave us a very warm reception. In a few seconds we were stung all over.

The women folks were made to stampede to the upper storey on our arrival, where they remained concealed while we stayed in the house, and the younger male members of the family hastily removed all the bedding and personal belongings from the principal room, which I was to occupy. Clouds of dust were raised when an attempt was made to sweep the dried mud floor. Out of the windows of the upper storey the women flung handsome carpets, which Sadek duly spread upon the floor.

The room was a very nice one, plastered all over and painted white, enriched with adhering dried leaves of red roses forming a design upon the ceiling. There were nine receptacles in the walls, and four more in the sides of the chimney piece. Next to this room was another similar one, and opposite in the courtyard a kind of alcove was used as a kitchen. It had a raised part of mud bricks some three feet high and about as broad, on which was fixed the weaving loom that stretched right across the court when in use. A hole was made in the raised portion, in which the weaver sat when at work, so as to keep the legs under the loom.



PERSIAN SPINNING WHEELS AND WEAVING LOOMS.

The loom is simple enough, the two sets of long horizontal threads being kept at high tension by an iron bar fixed into the cylindrical wooden rollers, round which the threads are rolled. There is then a vertical arrangement for moving the long horizontal sets of threads alternately up and down by means of pedals, a cross thread being passed between them with a spool, and beaten home each time with the large comb suspended in a vertical position. The threads are kept in position by two additional combs which represent the width of the cloth, and in which each horizontal thread is kept firm in its central position by a clever device of inverted loops between which it is passed and clenched tight. The cloth is rolled round a wooden cylinder. It is extremely strong and durable. Almost each house has a weaving loom.

On one side of the court was a recess in the wall for valuables. The padlock was closed by means of a screw. By the side of the kitchen one found the lumber and refuse room, and there were corresponding arrangements on the floor above. Unlike other Persian houses this was lighted by windows with neat woodwork, instead of by the usual skylight hole in the dome of the room.

The natives at this village were very handsome. There was a touch of the Afghan type in the men, and the women had fine faces with magnificent eyes. One found firm mouths with well-cut and properly developed lips, in contrast to the weak, drooping mouths of the people one had met in the western cities; and the noses were finely chiselled, with well-defined nostrils. There was no unsteadiness in the eyes, so common to the Persians of the north-west,—and these fellows consequently presented quite an honest appearance, while the overhanging brow added a look of pensiveness. The skull was peculiarly formed, slanting upwards considerably from the forehead to an abnormal height, and giving the cranium an elongated shape. The ears, too, generally malformed or under-developed in most Persians, were better shaped in these people, although by no means perfect. They, nevertheless, showed a certain refinement of blood and race.

In the matter of men's clothing it was gratifying to find the ugly pleated frockcoats discarded—or, rather, never adopted—and long picturesque shirts and ample trousers worn instead, held together by a kamarband. Over all was thrown a brown burnous, not unlike that of the Bedouins, and the head was wound in an ample turban of the Hindoo pattern.

Children wore short coats ornamented with embroidery and shells at the back and pretty silver buttons in front. Their little caps, too, were embellished with shells, beads, or gold braiding.

Nearly all male natives, old and young, suffered from complaints of the eyes, but not so the women,—probably because they spent most of the time in the house and did not expose themselves to the glare of the sun and salty dust, which seemed to be the principal cause of severe inflammation of the eyes.

Bambis village was greatly dependent upon Isfahan for its provisions, and therefore everything was very dear. Excellent vegetables, *shalga*, *sardek*, *churconda*, and pomegranates were nevertheless grown, by means of a most elaborate and ingenious way of irrigation, but the water was very brackish and dirty. Felt filters were occasionally used by the natives for purifying the drinking water.

There were a number of Sayids living at Bambis, who looked picturesque in their handsome green turbans; they were men of a splendid physique, very virile, simple in manner, serious and dignified, and were held in much respect by their fellow villagers.

FOOTNOTES:

[5] Charvadar—Caravan man.

CHAPTER XXXVII

Bambis—The Kashsan-Yezd high road—The Kevir plain—Minerals—Chano—Sand deposits—Sherawat—Kanats—Agdah—Stone cairns—Kiaftek—An isolated mount—A long sand bar—A forsaken village—Picturesque Biddeh—Handsome caravanserai at Meiboh—Rare baths—Shamsi—Sand-hills—Hodjatabad—Fuel—A "tower of silence"—A split camel—Thousands of borings for water—A four-towered well.

We left Bambis at ten o'clock on Sunday evening and travelled on a flat plain the whole night. One village (Arakan) was passed, and eventually we entered the Teheran-Kashan-Yezd high road which we struck at Nao Gombes. Here there were a Chappar Khana and an ancient Caravanserai—the latter said to be of the time of Shah Abbas—but we did not stop, and continued our journey along a broad, immense stretch of flat country consisting of sand and gravel.

My men were fast asleep on their mules, but the animals seemed to know their way well, as they had been on this road many times before. The night was extremely cold. We were now at an altitude of 4,240 feet in what is called the "Kevir," a small salt desert plain, enclosed to the south-west of the track by the south-easterly continuation of the Sara and Keble range; to the north-east by the Mehradji, Turkemani, and Duldul mountains; and to the north by the Aperek and Abiane mountains.

During the rainy weather the drainage of the latter two ranges is carried in large volumes into the plain between them, and eventually into the Kevir, in which it loses itself. To the south-east the Ardakan mountains form a barrier, having, however, a gap between them and the Andjile mountains, through which the road crosses in a south-easterly direction.

Antimony is found in the Mehradji mountains, and copper, lead (in several localities), nickel and antimony in the Anarek region. Silver is said to have been found in the Andjile. To the north-east, almost in the middle of the Kevir, stands the isolated high mountain of Siakuh.

Thirty-six miles from Bambis we reached Chano, a most desolate place, with a rest-house in ruins and a couple of suspicious-looking wells. We arrived here at eight in the morning, after having travelled since ten o'clock the previous evening, but we only allowed ourselves and our mules four hours' rest for breakfast, and we were again in the saddle at noon.

There is nothing to interest the traveller on this part of the road except an occasional passing caravan, and the scenery is dreary beyond words. Long, long stretches of flat, uninteresting sand and gravel, or sand alone in places. On nearing the spot where the track passes between the Andjile and Ardakan mountains we find sand deposits stretching out for nearly two miles from the mountain ranges to the south-west and south.

Shehravat (Shehrabad) village differs from most we have seen in the shape of its few roofs, which are semi-cylindrical, like a vault, and not semi-spherical. A mud tower rises above them, and there are a few fields and some fruit-trees near the habitations.

About a mile further, more sand dunes are to be found, and a long row of kanats carrying water to the village of Nasirabad, half a mile east of the track. Further on we come upon an open canal, and we can perceive a village about two miles distant, also to the east of the track.

Just before arriving at Agdah the earth has positively been disembowelled in search of water, so numerous are the kanats of all sizes and depths among which we wind our way. The large village of Agdah itself stands on a prominence (4,080 ft.) against a background of mountains, and is embellished with a great many orchards tidily walled round. It is a famous place for pomegranates, which are really delicious. As usual a number of ruined houses surround those still standing, and as we skirt the village wall over 30 feet high we observe some picturesque high round towers.

The telegraph wire (which we had met again at Nao Gombes) was here quite an amusing sight. In the neighbourhood of the village it was highly decorated with rags of all colours, and with stones tied to long strings which, when thrown up, wind themselves round and remain entangled in the wire.

There were some 300 habitations in Agdah, the principal one with a large quadrangular tower, being that of the Governor; but both the Chappar khana and the caravanserai were the filthiest we had so far encountered. A number of Sayids lived here.

We halted at four in the afternoon on Monday, October 19th. The mules were so tired that I decided to give them twelve hours' rest. It may be noticed that we had travelled from ten o'clock the previous evening until four in the afternoon—eighteen hours—with only four hours' rest,—quite good going for caravan marching. The mules were excellent.

At 4 A.M. on the Tuesday we rode out of the caravanserai, and still travelled south-east on a flat gravel plain, with the high Ardakan Mountains to the east. Fourteen miles or so from Agdah the country became undulating with large pebble stones washed down from the mountain-sides. Cairns of stone had been erected on the first hillock we came to near the road. We passed two villages, one on the track, the other about a mile north of it, and near this latter two or three smaller hamlets were situated.

Sixteen miles from Agdah we halted for an hour or so at the village of Kiafleh (Chaftah)—altitude 3,960 feet—with its round tower and the Mosque of Semur-ed-din one mile north of it. Here there was a Chappar khana. The labourers wore a short blue shirt and ample trousers, with white turban and white shoes. Having partaken of a hearty breakfast we were off again on the road in the broiling sun at 10.30 A.M. Beautiful effects of mirage were before us like splendid lakes, with the mountains reflected into them, and little islands.

As we go through the gap in the mountains that are now to the south-west and north-east of us the plain narrows to a width of some four miles, and the direction of the track is east-south-east. To the south-east the hillocks of a low range stretch as far as the mountains on the south-west, and several parallel ranges lie on the north-east. South, very far off, is the high Shirkuh mountain.

Eight miles from Kiafleh we cross over the low hill range by a pass (4,090 ft.) about 100 feet above the plain (3,990 ft.). There is a mournful look about the soil of black sand, and also about the gloomy shingle hill range extending from the north-east to the south-west. The black underlying rock where exposed to the air shows numberless holes corroded in it, as by the action of moving salt water. An inexplicable isolated hill stands in the centre of the valley, which here is not perfectly flat, but in a gentle incline, higher at its south-western extremity than at its north-eastern edge.

A formation of mud dunes similar to those we had encountered near Saigsi is here to be noticed, this time, however, not directly in front of each gap in the mountain range, but opposite them near the range in front, that forms a kind of bay. These dunes were probably caused by the deposit of sand and gravel left by a current that met the barrier of mountains on the opposite side of the bay.

On crossing the hill range some eighteen miles from Kiafleh, we come across a sand-bar which stretches in a semi-circle half way across the valley, where it then suddenly turns south-east. It is about 80 feet high. To all appearance the sand deposited upon this bar seems to have travelled in a direction from north north-east to south south-west. A mile further it meets another sand dune, stretching in a general direction of south-west to north-east. Where the higher dune comes to an end half-way across the valley we find a village, having the usual quadrangular mud enclosure with towers, an abandoned caravanserai fast tumbling down, and a few domed mud hovels. The larger and better preserved village of Bafru, one mile to the east of the track, is well surrounded by a long expanse of verdant trees. South of it is the other flourishing settlement of Deawat (Deabad).

The abandoned village of Assiabo Gordoneh, now in ruins, tells us a sad story. The village at one time evidently ran short of water. Hundreds of borings can be seen all round it in all directions, but they must have been of no avail. The place had to be forsaken.

The sand dune is here 80 feet high. The space between these two sand dunes—plateau-like—is nicely cultivated in patches where some water has been found.

We arrived in the evening at Biddeh, a very large and most weird place, with habitations partly cut into the high mud banks. The houses were several storeys high. The greater number of buildings, now in ruins, show evidence of the former importance of this place and the wonderful ancient aqueducts with the water carried over a high bridge from one side of a ravine to the other are of great interest. This must have been a prosperous place at one time. The whitish clay soil has been quaintly corroded by the action of water, and one finds curious grottoes and deep, contorted, natural channels. A mosque and several impressive buildings—the adjective only applies when you do not get too near them—stand high up against the cliff side. The whole place is quite picturesque.

The mules go along a narrow lane between walled fields, and then by a steepish ascent among ruined houses and patches of cultivation we reach the summit of the clay dune, on which the newer village of Meiboh (Maibut)—3,940 feet—is situated.

There is a most beautiful (for Persia) caravanserai here with a delightful domed tank of clear spring water, in which I then and there took a delicious bath, much to the horror of the caravanserai proprietor who assured me—when it was too late—that the tank was no *hammam* or bath, but was water for drinking purposes. His horror turned into white rage when, moreover, he declared that my soap, which I had used freely, would kill all the fish which he had carefully nursed for years in the tank. We spent most of the evening in watching the state of their health, and eventually it was with some relief that we perceived all the soap float away and the water again become as clear as crystal. To the evident discomfiture of the caravanserai man, when we paid the last visit to the tank at 4 A.M. just previous to my departure, no deaths were to be registered in the tank, and therefore no heavy damages to pay.

There is nothing one misses more than baths while travelling in central and eastern Persia. There is generally hardly sufficient water to drink at the various stages, and it is usually so slimy and bad that, although one does not mind drinking it, because one has to, one really would not dream of bathing or washing in it! Hence my anxiety not to lose my chance of a good plunge at Meiboh.

On leaving Meiboh at 4 A.M. we passed for a considerable distance through land under cultivation, the crop being principally wheat. A large flour-mill was in course of construction at Meiboh. After that we were again travelling on a sandy plain, with thousands of borings for water on all sides, and were advancing mainly to the south-west towards the mountains. We continued thus for some twelve miles as far as Shamsi, another large village with much cultivation around it. After that, there were sand and stones under our mules' hoofs, and a broiling sun over our heads. On both sides the track was screened by mountains and by a low hill range to the north-east.

About eight miles from Shamsi we entered a region of sand hills, the sand accumulations—at least, judging by the formation of the hills—showing the movement of the sand to have been from west to east. This fact was rather curious and contrasted with nearly all the other sand accumulations which we found later in eastern Persia, where the sand moved mostly in a south-westerly direction. No doubt the direction of the wind was here greatly influenced and made to deviate by the barriers of mountains so close at hand.

There were numerous villages, large and small, on both sides of the track. Hodjatabad, our last halt before reaching Yezd, only sixteen miles further, had a handsome caravanserai, the porch of which was vaulted over the high road. It was comparatively clean, and had spacious stabling for animals. Delicious grapes were to be obtained here, and much of the country had been cleared of the sand deposit and its fertile soil cultivated.

Fuel was very expensive in Persia. At the entrance of nearly every caravanserai was displayed a large clumsy wooden scale, upon which wood was weighed for sale to travellers, and also, of course, barley and fodder for one's animals. The weights were generally round stones of various sizes.

Jaffarabad, a very large and prosperous place, stood about one mile to the north-west of the caravanserai, and had vegetation and many trees near it; this was also the case with the other village of Medjamed, which had innumerable fields round it.

Firuzabad came next as we proceeded towards Yezd, and then, after progressing very slowly,—we sank deep in sand for several miles—we perceived upon a rugged hill a large round white "tower of silence," which had been erected there by the Guebres (*or* Parsees) for the disposal of their dead. We skirted the mud wall of Elawad—where the women's dress was in shape not unlike that of Turkish women, and consisted of ample, highly-coloured trousers and short zouave jacket. The men resembled Afghans.

I here came across the first running camel I had seen in Persia, and on it was mounted a picturesque rider, who had slung to his saddle a sword, a gun, and two pistols, while round his waistband a dagger, a powder-flask, bullet pouch, cap carrier, and various such other warlike implements hung gracefully in the bright light of the sun. A few yards further we came upon a ghastly sight—a split camel. The poor obstinate beast had refused to cross a narrow stream by the bridge, and had got instead on the slippery mud near the water edge. His long clumsy hind-legs had slipped with a sudden *écart* that had torn his body ripped open. The camel was being killed as we passed, and its piercing cries and moans were too pitiful for words.

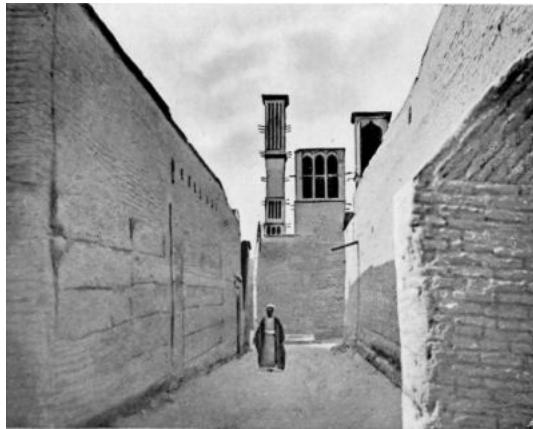
The mountain on which the huge tower of silence has been erected—by permission of Zil-es-Sultan, I was told—is quadrangular with a long, narrow, flat-topped platform on the summit. The best view of it is obtained from the south. Sadeh told me in all seriousness from information received from the natives, that the bodies are placed in these towers in a sitting position with a stick under the chin to support them erect. When crows come in swarms to pick away at the body, if the right eye is plucked out first by a plundering bird, it is said to be a sure sign that the ex-soul of the body will go to heaven. If the left eye is picked at first, then a warmer climate is in store for the soul of the dead.

After leaving behind the Guebre tower we come again upon thousands of borings for water, and ancient *kanats*, now dry and unused. The country grows less sandy about eight miles from Yezd, and we have now gradually ascended some 320 feet from the village of Meiboh (Maibut) to an altitude of 4,230 feet. Here we altogether miss the flourishing cultivation which lined the track as far as the Guebre tower, and cannot detect a single blade of grass or natural vegetation of any kind on any side. There are high mountains to the south-west and east.

On the right (west) side of the track, eight miles from Yezd, is the neat mud wall of Nusseratabad, with a few trees peeping above it, but to the left of us all is barren, and we toddled along on grey, clayish sand.

Half-way between Nusseratabad and Yezd a four-towered well is to be found, and a quarter of a mile further the Mazereh Sadrih village, one and a-half farsakhs from Yezd. The mules sank deep in the fine sand. There were a good many Guebres about, mostly employed in carrying manure on donkeys. One of them, who was just returning from one of these errands, addressed me, much to my surprise, in Hindustani, which he spoke quite fluently. He told me that he had travelled all over India, and was about to start again for Bombay.



A STREET IN YEZD, SHOWING HIGH *Badjirs* OR VENTILATING SHAFTS.

Some "*badjir*"—high ventilating shafts—and a minaret or two tell us that we are approaching the town of Yezd—the ancient city of the Parsees—and soon after we enter the large suburb of Mardavoh, with its dome and graceful tower.

A track in an almost direct line, and shorter than the one I had followed, exists between Isfahan and Yezd. It passes south of the Gao Khanah (Salt Lake) to the south-east of Isfahan.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

Yezd—Water supply—Climate—Cultivation—Products—Exports and imports—Population—Trade—Officials—Education—Persian children—Public schools—The Mushir school—The Parsee school—C.M.S. mission school—The medical mission—The hospital—Christianizing difficult—European ladies in Persia—Tolerance of race religions.

YEZD is the most central city of Persia, but from a pictorial point of view the least interesting city in the Shah's empire. There are a great many mosques—it is said about fifty—but none very beautiful. The streets are narrow and tortuous, with high walls on either side and nothing particularly attractive about them. Curious narrow arches are frequently to be noticed overhead in the streets, and it is supposed that they are to support the side walls against collapse.

There is not, at least I could not find, a single building of note in the city except the principal and very ancient mosque,—a building in the last degree of decay, but which must have formerly been adorned with a handsome frontage. There is a very extensive but tumbling-down wall around the city, and a wide moat, reminding one of a once strongly fortified place.

To-day the greater portion of Yezd is in ruins. The water supply is unfortunately very defective and irregular. There are no perennial streams of any importance, and all the irrigation works are dependent on artificial subterranean canals and kanats, and these in their turn are mostly subject to the rain and snow fall on the hills surrounding Yezd. Unluckily, the rains are now neither frequent nor abundant, and the land has in consequence been suffering severely from want of water. Snow falls in winter and to a great extent feeds the whole water supply of Yezd and its neighbourhood. It is not surprising, therefore, that more than three-quarters of the province of Yezd is barren land, cultivation being under the circumstances absolutely out of the question. Some portions of the province, however, where water is obtainable are quite fertile.

Towards the west the hills show some signs of vegetation, mainly fruit trees. But nothing larger than a bush grows wild, if we except occasional stunted fig-trees. Surrounded by mountains as Yezd is, there are two different climates close at hand: that of the "Kohestan" or hills, temperate in summer but piercing cold in winter, and the other, much warmer, of the low-lying land. In the eastern lowlands the summer heat is excessive, in autumn just bearable, and in the spring the climate is quite delightful. In all seasons, however, with few exceptions, it is generally dry and always healthy and pure.

Where some moisture is obtainable the soil is very fertile and is cultivated by the natives. The chief cultivated products are wheat, barley, and other cereals, cotton, opium, and tobacco. The vine flourishes near Yezd, and the wines used by the Parsees are not unpalatable. Mulberries are cultivated in large quantities. Silk is probably the most important product of the Yezd district. Wild game is said to be plentiful on the mountains. With the exception of salt, the mineral products of the district are insignificant.

Yezd is a great trading centre, partly owing to its geographical position, partly because its inhabitants are very go-ahead and enterprising. Yezd men are great travellers and possess good business heads. They go across the salt desert to Khorassan and Afghanistan, and they trade, with India principally, via Kerman, Bandar Abbas, and Lingah, and also to a small extent via Sistan. Previously the trade went entirely by Shiraz and Bushire, but now that road is very unsafe, owing to robbers. Yezd traders travel even much further afield, as far as China, India, Java. During my short stay I met quite a number of people who had visited Bombay, Calcutta, Russia, Bokhara, and Turkestan.

The settled population of Yezd consists mostly of Shia Mahomedans, the descendants of the ancient Persian race, with an intermixture of foreign blood; the Parsees or Zoroastrians, who still retain their purity of race and religious faith, and who are principally engaged in agriculture and commerce; a very small community of European Christians, including a few Armenian natives of Julfa (Isfahan). Then there are about one thousand Jews, who live mostly in abject poverty.

The Mahomedan population of the town may be approximately estimated at sixty thousand. Here, even more noticeably than in any other Persian town, there is very little outward show in the buildings, which are of earth and mud and appear contemptible, but the interiors of houses of the rich are pleasant and well-cared for. The miserable look of the town, however, is greatly redeemed by the beauty of the gardens which surround it.

It is to be regretted that the roads in and around Yezd are in a wretched condition, being absolutely neglected, for were there safer and more practicable roads trade would be facilitated and encouraged to no mean degree. As things stand now, indigenous trade is increasing slowly, but foreign trade is making no headway. The silk and opium trades, which were formerly the most profitable, have of late declined. Cottons and woollens, silk, the *Kasb* and *Aluhi* of very finest quality, shawls, cotton carpets and noted felts equal if not superior to the best of Kum, are manufactured both for home use and for export.

The exports mainly consist of almonds and nuts, tobacco, opium (to China), colouring matters, walnut-wood, silk, wool, cotton carpets, felts, skins, assafoetida, shoes, copper pots, country loaf-sugar, sweetmeats, for which Yezd is celebrated, etc. Henna is brought to Yezd from Minab and Bandar Abbas to be ground and prepared for the Persian market, being used with *rang* as a dye for the hair.

The chief imports are spices, cotton goods, yarn, prints, copper sheeting, tin slabs, Indian tea, broadcloth, jewellery, arms, cutlery, watches, earthenware, glass and enamel wares, iron, loaf-sugar, powdered sugar, etc.

The Government of Yezd, as of other cities of Persia, is purely despotic, limited only by the power and influence of the Mahomedan priests, the Mullahs, and by the dread of private vengeance or an occasional insurrection. It is true that the actions of Hakims and Governors and their deputies are liable to revision from the Teheran authorities, but this does not prevent exactions and extortions being carried on quite openly and on a large scale.

The present Governor, Salal-ud-dauleh—"Glory of the state,"—eldest son of Zil-es-Sultan, is an intelligent and well-to-do young man, sensibly educated, who tries his best to be fair to everybody; but it is very difficult for him to run alone against the strong tide of corruption which swamps everything in Persia. He is not in good health, and spends much of his time hunting wild game at his country place in the hills near Yezd. His town residence is a kind of citadel—not particularly impressive, nor clean—inside the city wall. The Naib-ul-Kukumat was the Deputy-Governor at the time of my visit. He seemed quite an affable and intelligent man.

Near the Palace in the heart of the city are the covered bazaars, old and new, and well stocked with goods, but they are in character so exactly like those of Teheran and Isfahan, already described in previous chapters, that a repetition is quite unnecessary. The streets are irregularly planned, and the older ones are very dark and dingy, but the newer arcades are lofty and handsome. The merchants seem—for Persia—quite active and business-like.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the population of Yezd is said to have been one hundred thousand souls, and to have dwindled down to less than thirty thousand in 1868-1870 during the terrific famine which took place at that time. Whether this is correct or not, it is difficult to ascertain, but to-day the city is on the increase again, and the population, as already stated, is certainly not less than sixty thousand. There are numerous Mahomedan *hammams* (baths)—some 65 or more—in Yezd, but Europeans are not allowed to enter them.

The Yezd people are very forward in educational matters. I inspected some of the schools and colleges, and was much impressed by the matter-of-fact, sensible way in which some of the more modern institutions were conducted. They would indeed put to shame a great many of our schools in England, and as for the talent of children, as compared with English children of the same age, one had better say nothing at all. With no exaggeration, children aged six analysed and reasoned out problems placed before them in a way that would in this country baffle men of six times that age. The quickness of the Persian child's brain is well-nigh astounding, and as for their goodness and diligence, there is only one word that fits them: they are simply "angelic." Their intense reverence for the teachers, their eagerness really to learn, and their quiet, attentive behaviour were indeed worthy of admiration. But it must be well understood that these angelic traits are confined to the school-days only. When they leave school the "angelic" wears off very soon, and the boys, unluckily, drift into the old and demoralized ways with which Persia is reeking.

There are about a dozen public schools in Yezd, but the one conducted on most modern lines is the new school started by the Mushir. If I understood aright, the Mushir provided the buildings and money to work the school for a period of time, after which if successful it will be handed over to be supported by the city or by private enterprise.

The school was excellent. There were a hundred pupils from the ages of six to fifteen, and they were taught Arabic, Persian, English, French, geography, arithmetic, &c. There was a Mudir or head master who spoke French quite fluently, and separate teachers for the other various matters. The school was admirably conducted, with quite a military discipline mingled with extreme kindness and thoughtfulness on the part of the teachers towards the pupils. By the sound of a bell the boys were collected by the Mudir in the court-yard, round which on two floors were the schoolrooms, specklessly clean and well-aired.

While I was being entertained to tea, sherbet, and coffee, on a high platform, I was politely requested to ascertain for myself the knowledge of the boys—most of whom had only been in the school less than a year. It was rather interesting to hear little chaps of six or eight rattle off, in a language foreign to them and without making a single mistake, all the capitals of the principal countries in the world, and the largest rivers, the highest mountains, the biggest oceans, and so on. And other little chaps—no taller than three feet—summed up and subtracted and divided and multiplied figures with an assurance, quickness and accuracy which I, personally, very much envied. Then they wrote English and French sentences on the slate, and Persian and Arabic, and I came out of the school fully convinced that whatever was taught in that school was certainly taught well. These were not special pupils, but any pupil I chose to pick out from the lot.

I visited another excellent institution, the Parsee school—one of several teaching institutions that have been established in Yezd by the Bombay Society for the amelioration of Persian Zoroastrians,—in a most beautiful building internally, with large courts and a lofty vaulted hall wherein the

classes are held. The boys, from the ages of six to fifteen, lined the walls, sitting cross-legged on mats, their notebooks, inkstands, and slate by their side. At the time of my visit there were as many as 230 pupils, and they received a similar education, but not quite so high, as in the Mushir school. In the Parsee school less time was devoted to foreign languages.

Ustad Javan Mard, a most venerable old man, was the head-master, and Ustad Baharam his assistant. The school seemed most flourishing, and the pupils very well-behaved. Although the stocks for punishing bad children were very prominent under the teacher's table, the head-master assured me that they were seldom required.

Another little but most interesting school is the one in connection with the clerical work done by the Rev. Napier Malcolm. It is attended principally by the sons of well-to-do Mussulmans and by a few Parsees, who take this excellent opportunity of learning English thoroughly. Most of the teaching is done by an Armenian assistant trained at the C. M. S. of Julfa. Here, too, I was delightfully surprised to notice how intelligent the boys were, and Mr. Malcolm himself spoke in high terms of the work done by the students. They showed a great facility for learning languages, and I was shown a boy who, in a few months, had picked up sufficient English to converse quite fluently. The boys, I was glad to see, are taught in a very sensible manner, and what they are made to learn will be of permanent use to them.

The Church Missionary Society is to be thanked, not only for this good educational work which it supplies in Yezd to children of all creeds, but for the well-appointed hospital for men and women. A large and handsome caravanserai was presented to the Medical Mission by Mr. Godarz Mihri-ban-i-Irani, one of the leading Parsees of Yezd, and the building was adapted and converted by the Church Missionary Society into a hospital, with a permanent staff in the men's hospital of an English doctor and three Armenian assistants. There is also a smaller women's hospital with an English lady doctor, who in 1901 was aided by two ladies and by an Armenian assistant trained at Julfa.

There are properly disinfected wards in both these hospitals, with good beds, a well appointed dispensary, and dissecting room.

The natives have of late availed themselves considerably of the opportunity to get good medical assistance, but few except the very poorest, it seems, care actually to remain in the hospital wards. They prefer to take the medicine and go to their respective houses. A special dark room has been constructed for the operation and cure of cataract, which is a common complaint in Yezd.

The health of Yezd is uncommonly good, and were it not that the people ruin their digestive organs by excessive and injudicious eating, the ailments of Yezd would be very few. The population is, without exception, most favourable to the work of the Medical Mission, and all classes seem to be grateful for the institution in the town.

The school work of the Mission necessarily appeals to a much smaller circle, but there is no doubt whatever about its being appreciated, and, further, there seems to be exceedingly little hostility to such religious inquiry and teaching as does not altogether collide with or appear to tend to severance from the Mussulman or Parsee communities. This is very likely due to the fast extending influence of the Behai sect, the members of which regard favourably an acquaintance with other non-idolatrous religions. These people, notwithstanding their being outside of official protection and in collision with the Mullahs, form to-day a large proportion of the population of Yezd, and exercise an influence on public opinion considerably wider than the boundaries of their sect. As for actual Missionary work of Christianization going beyond this point, the difficulties encountered and the risks of a catastrophe are too great at present for any sensible man to attempt it.

The European staff of the C.M.S. Mission, employed entirely in educational and medical work in Yezd, consists of the Rev. Napier Malcolm, M.A., a most sensible and able man, and Mrs. Malcolm, who is of great help to her husband; George Day Esq., L.R.C.P. & S., and Mrs. Day; Miss Taylor, L.R.C.P. & S., Miss Stirling, Miss Brighty.

The work for ladies is somewhat uphill and not always pleasant, for in Mussulman countries women, if not veiled, are constantly exposed to the insults of roughs; but people are beginning to get reconciled to what appeared to them at first the very strange habits of European women, and no doubt in time it will be less unpleasant for ladies to work among the natives. So far the few English ladies who have braved the consequences of undertaking work in Persia are greatly to be admired for their pluck, patience, and tact.

The Yezd C.M.S. Mission was started in May, 1898, by Dr. Henry White, who had a year's previous experience of medical work at Julfa and Isfahan. He was then joined in December of the same year by the Rev. Napier Malcolm, who had just come out from England. The European community of Yezd is very small. Besides the above mentioned people—who do not always reside in Yezd—there are two Englishmen of the Bank of Persia, and a Swiss employed by the firm of Ziegler & Co. That is all.

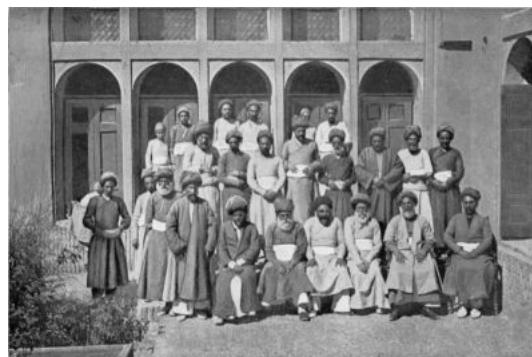
The fact that the Persian Government recognizes the "race religions," such as those of Armenians, Parsees and Jews, has led many to believe that religious liberty exists in Persia. There is a relative tolerance, but nothing more, and even the Parsees and Jews have had until quite lately—and occasionally even now have—to submit to considerable indignities on the part of the Mullahs. For new sects like the Behai, however, who abandon the Mussulman faith, there is absolutely no official protection. Great secrecy has to be maintained to avoid persecution. There seems, nevertheless, to be a disposition on the part of the Government to go considerably beyond this point of sufferance, but wider toleration does not exist at present, nor is it perfectly clear to what length the Government of the country would be prepared to go.

CHAPTER XXXIX

The Guebres of Yezd—Askizar—The Sassanian dynasty—Yezdeyard—The name "Parsees"—The Arab invasion of Persia—A romantic tale—Zoroaster—Parsees of India—Why the Parsees remained in Yezd and Kerman—Their number—Oppression—The teaching of the Zoroastrian religion and of the Mahomedan—A refreshing quality—Family ties—Injustice—Guebre places of worship—The sacred fire—Religious ceremonies—Three excellent points in the Zoroastrian religion—The

Parsees not "fire worshippers"—Purification of fire—No ancient sacred books—Attire—No civil rights—The "jazia" tax—Occupations—The Bombay Parsees Amelioration Society and its work—The pioneers of trade—A national assembly—Ardeshir Meheban Irani—Establishment of the Association—Naturalized British subjects—Consulates wanted—The Bombay Parsees—Successful traders—Parsee generosity—Mr. Jamsetsji Tata.

YEZD is extremely interesting from a historical point of view, and for its close association with that wonderful race the "Guebres," better known in Europe by the name of Parsees. The ancient city of Askizar was buried by shifting sands, in a desert with a few oases, and was followed by the present Yezd, which does not date from earlier than the time of the Sassanian dynasty.



ARDESHIR MEHEBAN IRANI AND THE LEADING MEMBERS OF THE ANGUMAN-I-NASSERI (PARSEE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY), YEZD.

Yezdeyard, the weak and unlucky last King of the Sassan family, which had reigned over Persia for 415 years, was the first to lay the foundations of the city and to colonize its neighbourhood. It is in this city that, notwithstanding the sufferings and persecution of Mussulmans after the Arab invasion of Persia, the successors of a handful of brave people have to this day remained faithful to their native soil.

To be convinced that the Parsees of Yezd are a strikingly fine lot of people it is sufficient to look at them. The men are patriarchal, generous, sober, intelligent, thrifty; the women, contrary to the usage of all Asiatic races, are given great freedom, but are renowned for their chastity and modesty.

The name of Parsees, adopted by the better-known Guebres who migrated to India, has been retained from Fars or Pars, their native country, which contained, before the Arab invasion, Persepolis as the capital, with a magnificent royal palace. From this province the whole kingdom eventually adopted the name.

It is not necessary to go into the history of the nine dynasties which ruled in Persia before it was conquered by the Arabs, but for our purpose it is well to remind the reader that of all these dynasties the Sassanian was the last, and Yezdeyard, as we have seen, the ultimate King of the Sassan family.

One is filled with horror at the romantic tale of how, through weakness on his part and treachery on that of his people, the fanatic Arabs, guided by the light of Allah the Prophet, conquered Persia, slaying the unbelievers and enforcing the Mahommedan religion on the survivors. The runaway Yezdeyard was treacherously slain with his own jewelled sword by a miller, in whose house he had obtained shelter after the disastrous battle of Nahavand and his flight through Sistan, Khorassan and Merv. Persia, with every vestige of its magnificence, was lost for ever to the Persians, and the supremacy of Mahommedanism, with its demoralizing influence, its haughty intolerance and fanatic bigotry, was firmly established from one end of the country to the other. The fine temples, the shrines of the Zoroastrians, were mercilessly destroyed or changed into mosques.

Zoroaster, the prophet of the Parsees, had first promulgated his religion during the reign of Gushtasp (B.C. 1300) of the Kayanian family, but after centuries of vicissitudes and corruption it was not till the time of the Sassanian dynasty (A.D. 226) that Ardesir Babekhan, the brave and just, restored the Zoroastrian religion to its ancient purity. It is this religion—the true religion of ancient Persia—that was smothered by the conquered Arabs by means of blood and steel, and is only to-day retained in a slightly modified character by the few remaining Guebres of Yezd and Kerman, as well as by those who, sooner than sacrifice their religious convictions and their independence, preferred to abandon their native land, migrating to India with their families, where their successors are to be found to this day still conservative to their faith.

It is not too much to say that, although—in the conglomeration of races that form the Indian Empire—the Parsees are few in number, not more than 100,000 all counted, they nevertheless occupy, through their honesty, intelligence and firmness of character, the foremost place in that country. But with these Parsees who migrated we have no space to deal here. We will merely see why the remainder escaped death at the hands of the Mahomedans, and, while ever remaining true to their religion, continued in Yezd and Kerman when, under the new rulers, almost the whole of the Zoroastrian population of Persia was compelled to embrace the religion of Islam.

The fact that Yezd and Kerman were two distant and difficult places of access for the invading Moslems, may be taken as the likely cause of the Zoroastrians collecting there. Also for the same reason, no doubt, the Arabs, tired of fighting and slaying, and having given way to luxury and vice, had become too lazy to carry on their wholesale slaughter of the Zoroastrian population. This leniency, however, has not done away entirely with constant tyrannical persecution and oppression of the unbelievers, so that now the number of Zoroastrians of Yezd does not exceed 7,000, and that of Kerman is under 3,000. A great many Zoroastrians have, notwithstanding their unwillingness, been since compelled to turn Mahomedans. Even fifty years ago the Zoroastrians of Yezd and Kerman called in Persia contemptuously "Guebres," were subjected to degradations and restrictions of the worst kind. Now their condition, under a stronger government and some foreign influence, has slightly ameliorated, but is not yet entirely secure against the cruelty, fanaticism, and injustice of the Mullahs and officials in the place.

If Yezd is, for its size, now the most enterprising trading centre of Persia, it is mostly due to the Guebres living there. Although held in contempt by the Mullahs and by the Mahomedans in general, these Guebres are manly fellows, sound in body and brain, instead of lascivious, demoralized, effeminate creatures like their tyrants. Hundreds of years of oppression have had little effect on the moral and physical condition of the Guebres. They are still as hardy and proud as when the whole country belonged to them; nor has the demoralizing contact of the present race, to whom they are subject, had any marked effect on their industry, which was the most remarkable characteristic in the ancient Zoroastrians.

The Zoroastrian religion teaches that every man must earn his food by his own exertion and enterprise,—quite unlike the Mahomedan teaching, that the height of bliss is to live on the charity of one's neighbours, which rule, however, carries a counterbalancing conviction that the more money dispensed in alms, the greater the certainty of the givers obtaining after death a seat in heaven.

One of the most refreshing qualities of the Guebres (and of the Parsees in India) is that they are usually extraordinarily truthful for natives of Asia, and their morality, even in men, is indeed quite above the average. There are few races among which marriages are conducted on more sensible lines and are more successful. The man and woman united by marriage live in friendly equality, and are a help to one another. Family ties are very strong, and are carried down even to distant relations, while the paternal and maternal love for their children, and touching filial love for their parents, is most praiseworthy and deserves the greatest admiration.

The Mussulmans themselves, although religiously at variance and not keen to follow the good example of the Guebres, admit the fact that the Zoroastrians are honest and good people. It is principally the Mullahs who are bitter against them and instigate the crowds to excesses. There is not such a thing for the Guebres as justice in Persia, and even up to quite recent times their fire temples and towers of silence were attacked and broken into by Mussulman crowds, the fires, so tenderly cared for, mercilessly put out: the sacred books destroyed, and the temples desecrated in the most insulting manner.

There are a number of Guebre places of worship in Yezd, and in the surrounding villages inhabited by Guebre agriculturists, but the principal one is in the centre of the Guebre quarter of Yezd city. It is a neat, small structure, very simple and whitewashed inside, with a fortified back room wherein the sacred fire is kept alight, well covered with ashes by a specially deputed priest. It is hidden so as to make it difficult for intending invaders to discover it; and the strong door, well protected by iron bars, wants a good deal of forcing before it can be knocked down.

The religious ceremony in the temple of the Guebres is very interesting, the officiating priests being dressed up in a long white garment, the *sudra*, held together by a sacred girdle, and with the lower portion of the face covered by a square piece of cloth like a handkerchief; on the head they wear a peculiar cap. Various genuflexions, on a specially spread carpet, and bows are made and prayers read.



PARSEE PRIESTS OF YEZD OFFICIATING DURING CEREMONY IN THEIR FIRE TEMPLE.

The priests belong generally to the better classes, and the rank is mostly hereditary. Certain ceremonies are considered necessary before the candidate can attain the actual dignity of a prelate. First of the ceremonies comes the *navar*, or six days' retreat in his own dwelling, followed by the ceremony of initiation; four more days in the fire temple with two priests who have previously gone through the *Yasna* prayers for six consecutive mornings. Although after this he can officiate in some ceremonies, such as weddings, he is not fully qualified as a priest until the *Bareshnum* has been undergone and again the *Yasna*. The following day other prayers are offered to the guardian spirit, and at midnight the last ceremony takes place, and he is qualified to the degree of *Maratab*, when he can take part in any of the Zoroastrian rituals.

As a preliminary, great purity of mind and body are required from candidates, and they are made to endure lavish ablutions of water and cow urine, clay and sand—an ancient custom, said to cleanse the body better than modern soaps. After that the candidate is secluded for nine whole days in the fire temple, and is not permitted to touch human beings, vegetation, water nor fire, and must wash himself twice more during that time, on the fourth day and on the seventh. It is only then that he is considered amply purified and able to go through the *Navar* ceremony.

The Zoroastrian religion is based on three excellent points—"good thoughts, good words, good deeds"—and as long as people adhere to them it is difficult to see how they can go wrong. They worship God and only one God, and do not admit idolatry. They are most open-minded regarding other people's notions, and are ever ready to recognise that other religions have their own good points.

Perhaps no greater libel was ever perpetrated on the Parsees than when they were put down as "fire-worshippers," or "worshippers of the elements." The Parsees are God-worshippers, but revere, not worship, fire and the sun as symbols of glory, heat, splendour, and purity; also because fire is to human beings one of the most necessary things in creation, if not indeed the most necessary thing; otherwise they are no more fire-worshippers than the Roman Catholics, for instance, who might easily come under the same heading, for they have lighted candles and lights constantly burning in front of images inside their churches.

Besides, it is not the fire itself, as fire, that Parsees nurse in their temples, but a fire specially purified for the purpose. The process is this: Several fires, if possible originally lighted by some natural cause, such as lightning, are brought in vases. Over one of these fires is placed a flat perforated tray of metal on which small pieces of very dry sandal-wood are made to ignite by the mere action of the heat, but must not actually come in contact with the flame below. From this fire a third one is lighted in a similar manner, and nine times this operation is repeated, each successive fire being considered purer than its predecessor, and the result of the ninth conflagration being pronounced absolutely pure.

It is really the idea of the purifying process that the Parsees revere more than the fire itself, and as the ninth fire alone is considered worthy to occupy a special place in their temples, so, in similarity to it, they aim in life to purify their own thoughts, words, and actions, and glorify them into "good thoughts, true words, noble actions." This is indeed very different from fire-worshipping of which the Parsees are generally accused.

In Yezd the Guebres told me that they possessed very few sacred books in their temple (or if they had them could not show them). They said that all the ancient books had been destroyed by the Mahomedans or had been taken away to India.

There were also several smaller temples in the neighbourhood of Yezd, which had gone through a good many vicissitudes in their time, but now the Parsees and their places of worship are left in comparative peace. Parsee men and women are still compelled to wear special clothes so as to be detected at once in the streets, but this custom is gradually dying out. The women are garbed in highly-coloured striped garments, a short jacket and a small turban, leaving the face uncovered. The men are only allowed to wear certain specially-coloured cloaks and are not allowed to ride a horse in the streets of Yezd.

Parsees do not enjoy the civil rights of other citizens in Persia, and justice was until quite lately out of the question in the case of differences with Mussulmans. At death a man's property would be lawfully inherited by any distant relation who had adopted the religion of Moslem, instead of by the man's own children and wife who had remained faithful to their creed; and in the matter of recovering debts from Mussulmans the law of Persia is certainly very far indeed from helping a Guebre. This is necessarily a great obstacle in commercial intercourse.

Worst of all the burdens formerly inflicted upon the Guebres—as well as upon Armenians and Jews of Persia—was the "jazia" tax. Some thousand or so male Guebres of Yezd were ordered to pay the tax yearly, which with commissions and "squeezes" of Governors and officials was made to amount to some two thousand tomans, or about £400 at the present rate of exchange. Much severity and even cruelty were enforced to obtain payment of the tax.

The Parsees were, until quite lately, debarred from undertaking any occupation that might place them on a level with Mahomedans. With the exception of a few merchants—who, by migrating to India and obtaining British nationality, returned and enjoyed a certain amount of nominal safety—the majority of the population consists of agriculturists and scavengers.

Mainly by the efforts of the Bombay Amelioration Society of the Parsees, the Guebres of Yezd and Kerman fare to-day comparatively well. The "jazia" has been abolished, and the present Shah and the local Government have to be congratulated on their fairness and consideration towards these fine people. May-be that soon they will be permitted to enjoy all the rights of other citizens, which they indeed fully deserve. Many steps have been made in that direction within the last few years. The Parsees are a most progressive race if properly protected. They are only too anxious to lead the way in all reformation, and, with all this, are remarkable for their courteousness and refined manner.

The most prominent members of the Yezd community, especially the sons of Meheban Rustam, have been the pioneers of trade between Yezd and India. Besides the excellent Parsee school, several other institutions have been established in Yezd and its suburbs by the Bombay Society, supported by a few charitable Parsees of Bombay and some of the leading members of the Parsee community in Yezd. The Bombay Society has done much to raise the Zoroastrians of Persia to their present comparatively advanced state, but trade and commerce also have to a great extent contributed to their present eminence.

The Bombay Society nominates and sends an agent to reside in Teheran, the capital of Persia, to look after the interests of helpless Zoroastrians, and the Parsees of Yezd have moreover a national assembly called the Anguman-i-Nasseri.

I was entertained by this interesting body of men, and received from their president, Ardeshir Meheban Irani, much of the valuable information here given about the Yezd Parsees. The Association has an elected body of twenty-eight members, all honorary, the most venerable and intelligent of the community, and its aims are to advocate the social rights of the Zoroastrians as a race, to settle disputes arising between the individuals of the community, to defend helpless Parsees against Moslem wantonness, and to improve their condition generally.

The Association was established on the 3rd of February, 1902, by the late Mr. Kaikosroo Firendaz Irani, the then agent of the Bombay Society. In this work he had the advice and help of the leading men of the community.

There are several naturalised British subjects in Yezd, including the President of the Association—who speaks and writes English as well as any Englishman—but it is greatly to be regretted that these men cannot obtain proper protection from the British Government. Yet these fellows could be of very great assistance to England in spreading British influence in Yezd, not to speak of increasing British trade—which they are only too anxious to do, if a chance is given them—in conjunction with the representatives of their race in Bombay—the most Anglicised, except in religion, of all our subject races of India. There was formerly a British Vice-Consul in Yezd, but for some reason known

to the Government, while Russia finds it expedient to establish Consular agents in all the principal centres of Persia, we have actually withdrawn our representative even from so important a city as Yezd!

The Parsee communities of Yezd and Bombay are in constant communication with each other, and it is well known what marvellous prosperity these fugitives of Fars have now attained in Bombay, through their honesty and hard work, especially since their connection with the British, whose civilisation, with the exception of religion and the hat, they have entirely adopted. Most of them speak perfect English, and many of the sons of the wealthier Parsees have been educated at universities in England. We find them working banking houses on a large scale, and cotton mills, running lines of steamers and shipbuilding yards. They trade considerably with the Far East and Far West, and with every nook in Asia. Even as far as Samarkand, Bokhara, Siberia, Nijni-Novgorod, and St. Petersburg, Parsee traders are to be found, and in Japan, China, the United States, and Canada. With England they carry on a very extensive trade, and through them as intermediaries much of the import trade into India finds its way into neighbouring markets more difficult of access to the direct British exporter.

One of the most noticeable traits of the flourishing Parsees of Bombay is their extreme generosity, often hampered by petty, stupid, Anglo-Indian officialdom, which they seem to stand with amazing patience and good-nature. We find well appointed hospitals erected by them; schools, clubs, and only lately one of the richest of all Parsees, Mr. Jamsetsji Tata, has given the city of Bombay no less a gift than a quarter of a million pounds for the erection of a university on the most modern lines in that city.

CHAPTER XL

Badjirs—Below the sand level—Chappar service between Yezd and Kerman—The elasticity of a farsakh—Sar-i-Yezd—An escort—Where three provinces meet—Etiquette—Robbers' impunity—A capital story—Zen-u-din—The Serde Kuh range—Desert—Sand accumulations—Kermanshah—The Darestan and Godare Hashimshan Mountains—Chappar Khana inscriptions and ornamentations by travellers—Shemsh.

THE most characteristic objects in Yezd are the *badjirs*, a most ingenious device for catching the wind and conveying it down into the various rooms of dwelling. These *badjirs* are on the same principle as the ventilating cowls of ships. The ventilating shafts are usually very high and quadrangular, with two, three, or more openings on each side at the summit and corresponding channels to convey the wind down into the room below. The lower apertures of the channels are blocked except on the side where the wind happens to blow, and thus a draught is created from the top downwards, sweeping the whole room and rendering it quite cool and pleasant even in the hottest days of summer. The reason that one finds so many of these high *badjirs* in Yezd is probably that, owing to constant accumulations of sand, the whole city is now below the level of the surrounding desert, and some device had to be adopted to procure fresh air inside the houses and protect the inhabitants from the suffocating lack of ventilation during the stifling heat of the summer. The *badjirs* are certainly constructed in a most scientific or, rather, practical manner, and answer the purpose to perfection.

When we leave Yezd the city itself cannot be seen at all, but just above the sand of the desert rise hundreds of these quadrangular towers, some very large indeed, which give the place a quaint appearance.

From Yezd to Kerman there is again a service of post-horses, so I availed myself of it in order to save as much time as possible. The horses were not much used on this road so they were excellent.

I departed from Yezd on October 26th, and soon after leaving the city and riding through the usual plentiful but most unattractive ruins, we were travelling over very uninteresting country, practically a desert. We passed two villages—Najafabad and Rachmatabad—and then wound our way through avenues of dried-up mulberry trees at Mahomedabad or Namadawat, a village where silk-worms are reared in quantities, which accounts for the extensive mulberry plantations to provide food for them. The village is large and is three farsakhs from Yezd, or something like ten miles.

The "farsakh"—the most elastic measure ever invented—decreases here to just above three miles, whereas further north it averaged four miles.

In a strong wind we rode on, first on sand, then on gravelly soil, ever through dreary, desolate country. The villages, Taghiabad, Zehnawat, etc., get smaller and poorer and further apart, and some eight farsakhs from Yezd we eventually reach the small town of Sar-i-Yezd. From Namadawat the country was an absolutely flat gravel plain with no water.



INTERIOR OF OLD CARAVANSERAI WITH CENTRAL WATER TANK.

At Sar-i-Yezd (altitude 4,980 feet) we were detained some time. The highest official in the place had received orders from the Governor of Yezd not to let me proceed without a strong guard to accompany me. This was rather a nuisance than otherwise, for, although the country between Sar-i-Yezd and Anar was reported infested by robbers, we really should have been able to hold our own against them even without the rabble that was sent to accompany us.

After a delay of some hours five soldiers—as picturesque as they would have been useless in case of danger—put in an appearance. They had old long muzzle loaders, which must have been more dangerous to the person firing them than to the ones fired at, and they wore elaborate leather belts with two ample pouches for lead bullets, two gunpowder flasks made of desiccated sheep testicles, a leather bag for small shot, and a large iron ring with small clips for caps. Horses could not be procured for these men, so they had to follow my baggage on foot, which caused a further delay.

We left shortly before sunset as I intended marching the whole night. There was a great discussion among these soldiers about crossing over into Kerman territory, four farsakhs beyond Sar-i-Yezd, and just at the point where the robbers are supposed to attack caravans the guard, whether through fear or otherwise, declined to come on. Sadek remonstrated most bitterly, but three of them left us, while two said they had been entrusted with orders to see me and my luggage safely to the place where another guard could be obtained and would continue. I tried to persuade them to go back too, but they would not.

It appears that between Sar-i-Yezd and Zen-u-din there is an expanse of waste land near the boundary of the Yezd, Kerman and Farsistan (Shiraz) provinces, the possession of which is declared by the Governors of all these provinces not to belong to them, the boundary having never been properly defined. So robbers can carry on their evil deeds with comparative immunity, as they do not come under the jurisdiction of any of the three Governors in question. Moreover, if chased by Yezd soldiers, they escape into Shiraz or Kerman territory, and if pursued by Kerman troops they escape into either of the neighbouring provinces, while the Governor of Shiraz, being the furthest and least interested in that distant corner of his province, really never knows and probably does not care to learn what takes place in so remote and barren a spot. In any case he will not be held responsible for anything happening there. It would certainly involve him in too great expense and difficulty to send soldiers to live so far into the desert, and unless in great force they could be of little assistance to caravans; so that, as things stand, robber bands have it all their own way.

Strict etiquette is observed between Governors of provinces and their subordinates, and an encroachment on one's neighbour's territory would be considered a most outrageous breach of good manners and respective rights.

Still travelling quite fast across sand, and with no brigands in sight, we went on, pleasantly entertained by the astounding yarns of the two remaining soldiers. We were told how, twenty years ago, a foreign doctor—nationality unknown—being attacked by a band of thirty robbers, produced a small bottle of foreign medicine—presumably a most highly concentrated essence of chloroform—from his waistcoat pocket and, having removed the cork, the thirty brigands immediately fell on all sides in a deep sleep. The doctor and his party then continued their journey quietly, and returned several days later with a number of soldiers, who had no trouble in despatching the robbers from a temporary into an eternal sleep, without their waking up at all!

On being asked how it was that the doctor himself remained awake when such a powerful narcotic was administered, the narrator did not lose his presence of mind nor his absence of conscience, and said the doctor had, during the operation, held his nose tight with his two fingers. The doctor had since been offered thousands of tomans for the precious bottle, but would not part with it.

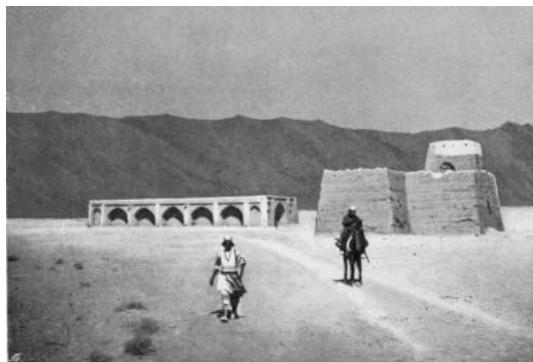
The soldiers told us a great many more stories of this type, and they recounted them with such an *aplomb* and seriousness that they nearly made one fall off one's saddle with laughter. Every now and then they insisted on firing off their rifles, which I requested them to do some distance away from my horses. There were no mishaps.

At Sar-i-Yezd I had not been able to obtain fresh horses, so the Yezd horses had been taken on, with an additional donkey. They had gone splendidly, and we arrived at Zen-u-din shortly after ten o'clock at night.

Solitary, in the middle of the desert, and by the side of a salt water well, stands Zen-u-din (Alt. 5,170 feet). There is a chappar station, and a tumbling-down, circular caravanserai with massively built watch-towers. These appeared much battered as if from the result of repeated attacks.

We left our soldier protectors behind here, and two more military persons, in rags and with obsolete guns, insisted on accompanying us, but as they were on foot and would have delayed us considerably I paid them off, a hundred yards from Zen-u-din, and sent them back.

There are mountains extending from the north-east to the south-east, the Serde Kuh range, and to the south-east they are quite close to the track and show low passes a mile or so apart by which the range could easily be crossed. To the west also we have high hills, some three or four miles apart from the mountains to the north-east, and to the north an open desert as far as Yezd. We notice here again the curious accumulations of sand high up on the south mountain side, and also to the south-west of the mountain range east of us.



TYPICAL CARAVANSERAI AND MUD FORT IN THE DESERT BETWEEN YEZD AND KERMAN.



A TRADE CARAVANSERAI, KERMAN.

At ten in the morning, after a dreary ride through desolate country, we reached the small village of Kermanshah (5,300 feet), where a post station and caravanserai were to be found, a few trees and, above all, some good drinking water. From Zen-u-din to Kermanshah, a distance of sixteen miles (five farsakhs), we had seen only one solitary tree to the south-west of the track.

We had now rugged mountains about a mile to the west and south-west. These were ranges parallel to one another, the Darestan mountains being the nearest to us and the Godare Hashimshan behind them further south-west.

While I was waiting for fresh horses to be got ready I amused myself at every station studying the curious inscriptions and ornamentations by scribbling travellers on the caravanserai and post-house walls. Laboriously engraved quotations from the Koran were the most numerous, then the respective names of travellers, in characters more or less elaborate according to the education of the writer, and generally accompanied by a record of the journey, place of birth, and destination of the scribbler. Occasionally one was startled by a French inscription in sickening terms of humility, the work of Persian minor officials in Government employ, who thus made a public exhibition of their knowledge of a foreign language and expounded in glowing terms their servile admiration for superiors.

More interesting were the records of illiterate travellers who, in default of literature, placed one arm and hand upon the whitewashed wall and traced their silhouette with the point of a knife or a bit of charcoal or a brush held in the other hand.

Then came those still more artistically inclined, who ventured into conventionalised representations of the peacock with widely-expanded tail—the most favourite and frequent of Persian outbursts of Chappar khana art, and probably the most emblematic representation of Persian character. The conventionalised peacock is represented in a few lines, such as one sees on the familiar Persian brass trays.

The Shah's portrait with luxuriant moustache is met in most Chappar khanas scraped somewhere upon the wall, and not infrequently other whole human figures drawn in mere lines, such as children do in our country, but with a greater profusion of anatomical detail. Very frequent indeed are the coarse representations of scenes in daily life, which we generally prefer to leave unrecorded—in fact, the artistic genius of the Persian traveller seems to run very much in that direction, and these drawings are generally the most elaborate of all, often showing signs of multiple collaboration.

Horses fully harnessed are occasionally attempted, but I never saw a camel represented. Only once did I come across a huge representation of a ship or a boat. Small birds drawn with five or six lines only, but quite characteristic of conventionalised Persian art, were extremely common, and were the most ingeniously clever of the lot. Centipedes and occasional scorpions were now and then attempted with much ingenuity and faithfulness of detail but no artistic merit.

All these ornamentations, studied carefully, taught one a good deal of Persian character. That the Persian is very observant and his mind very analytical, is quite out of the question, but his fault lies

in the fact that in art as in daily life minor details strike him long before he can grasp the larger and more important general view of what he sees. He prefers to leave that to take care of itself. We find the same characteristics not only in his frivolous Chappar khana art—where he can be studied unawares and is therefore quite natural—but in his more serious art, in his music, in his business transactions, in his political work. The lack of simplicity which we notice in his rude drawings can be detected in everything else he does, and the evident delight which he takes in depicting a peacock with its tail spread in all its glory is nothing more and nothing less than an expression of what the Persian feels within himself in relation to his neighbours.

Nothing has a greater fascination for him than outward show and pomp. He cares for little else, and a further proof of this unhappy vainglory is obtained by the study of the wall scrolls of the travelling public—whether travelling officially or for trading purposes—representing in Persia usually the most go-ahead and intelligent section of the Persian population.

On we go along the dreary track, again on flat, desolate country of sand and stones at the spur of the mountains to the west and south-west. Sand deposits rise at a gentle gradient up to half the height of these mountains, well padding their slopes. The track here leads us due south to a low pass at an altitude of 5,680 feet. One gets so tired of the monotonous scenery that one would give anything to perceive something attractive; nor is the monotony of the journey diminished by two other miserable nagging soldiers who have clung to us as an escort from Kermanshah, and who are running after our horses moaning and groaning and saying they are starved and tired and have not received their pay nor their food from the Government for several months.

On the other side of the pass there is a basin encircled by mountains, except to the south-east, where we find an open outlet. The track goes south-south-east through this yellow plain, and on proceeding across we find several conical black mounds with curious patches of a verdigris colour. To the east rises a low sand dune.

We come in sight of Shemsh, a most forlorn, cheerless place. Sadek gallops ahead with the *horjins*, in which he has the cooking pans, some dead fowls, and a load of vegetables and pomegranates, and I slow down to give him time to prepare my lunch. I arrived at the place at 2.45 P.M. There was only a desolate caravanserai and a Chappar khana.

On the Yezd-Kerman track there are not more than three horses at each post station—at some there are only two,—and as I required no less than five horses, or, if possible, six, I always had to take on the deficient number of horses from the previous stations. I generally gave these horses two or three hours' rest, but it made their marches very long indeed, as it must be remembered that on my discharging them they must at once return to their point of departure. Fortunately, the traffic was so small by this road that the horses were in good condition, and so I was able to proceed at a good rate all along. Occasionally, one or two horses had to be taken on for three consecutive stages, which, taking as an average six farsakhs for each stage, made the distance they had to travel, including return journey, six stages, or some 120 miles in all.

The altitude of Shemsh was 5,170 feet.

CHAPTER XLI

Desolate scenery—Anar—A word for Persian servants—Sadek's English—Bayas village—Sand deposits—Robber villagers—Kushkuhyeh Chappar khana—The post contractor, his rifle—Cotton cultivation—Fast growing Rafsenju—Trade tracks—Hindu merchants—Sadek and the Chappar boy—Kafter-han—Photography and women—A flat, salty stretch of clay and sand—The Kuh Djupahr peaks—Robat women—Baghiah—Attractive girls—*Mirage*—Arrival in Kerman.

I LEFT Shemsh two hours later, at 4.30, and we travelled over slightly undulating country on sandy ground with occasional tracts of stones and gravel. If possible, this part was even more desolate than the scenery we had found before reaching here, and not a vestige of vegetation or animal life could be detected anywhere. When night descended upon us we had glorious moonlight to brighten our way, and we marched on gaily—this time without the nuisance of an escort—until we arrived at Anar at 9.30 P.M.—seven farsakhs (about 22 miles) from Shemsh.

From what one could see during our short stay in the night there appeared to be a large village, mostly in ruins, with a few trees and a mud fort. We had gradually descended here to 4,800 feet. The water was quite good. We only allowed ourselves three hours to have our dinner and sleep, and I ordered the horses to be ready shortly after midnight.

And here, whatever other faults they may have, a word of commendation must be put in for the endurance of Persian servants. It is all very well for one's self to do with little sleep, but servants who will go days and days without any at all, and without a word of complaint or sign of collapse, are retainers not easily found and not to be despised. Certainly, one seldom obtains such qualities in European servants. After doing fifty or sixty miles on the saddle we would get off, and I rested awhile, writing up my notes or, if at night, changing plates in my cameras, but Sadek never had any rest at all. No sooner had we jumped off our horses than he had to undo the saddles and unpack the baggage and kill fowls and cook my meals, which all took him some little time; then he had to wash or clean up everything and repack, and run about the villages to purchase provisions, and all this kept him well employed until the hour of departure; so that, even when I could put in a couple of hours' sleep of a night, he never had time to sleep at all. Sleeping on the saddle, of course, was usual when we travelled by caravan, but was impossible when chapparing. So that he had to go several days at a time without a moment's wink.

The remarkable facility with which, under these trying circumstances, he got most excellent meals ready at all hours of the day or night and in the most outlandish places, and the magic way in which he could produce fuel and make a fire out of the most unlikely materials, was really extraordinary. True, he took himself and his work most seriously and his pride lay principally in having no reproach about the cooking.

He had a smattering of English that was very quaint. Everything above ground he called "upstairs"; anything on the ground or below was "downstairs." Thus, to mount and dismount a horse was laconically expressed "horse upstairs," "horse downstairs." Similarly, to lie down was "downstairs," to get up "upstairs." Anything involving violent motion was "shoot," by which single word to fall, to kick, to bite, to drop, to jump, to throw away, were defined. He possessed a good vocabulary of swear words—which he had learnt from sailors at Bushire—and these served him well when anything went wrong; but I forbade him to use them in my presence as I wished to have the monopoly myself, and thus his English vocabulary was very much curtailed. The remainder of his English conversation applied entirely to cooking chickens.

Shortly after midnight we moved out of the Chappar khana, and, barring some slight cultivation in the immediate neighbourhood of the village, we soon entered again upon the flat, sandy desert. We had a lovely full moon over us, which added to the pleasure of travelling, and we rode on to Bayas (five farsakhs), some seventeen or eighteen miles, where we arrived at five in the morning. The altitude of this place was exactly the same as that of Anar, 4,800 feet.

Bayas is a tiny village with a few mulberry trees and a small stream of water. It has a fair caravanserai. We rested the horses for a couple of hours, while I had breakfast, and by 7.30 A.M. we were again in our saddles.

To the south-west and north-east by east we again perceived the familiar high sand deposits, all along the base of the mountain ranges, and they reached up to two-thirds of the height of the mountains, forming a smooth, inclined plane rising very gently from the flat desert on which we were travelling. To the north-east by east the sand-banks rose nearly to the summit of the hill range.

Sadek and the chappar boy pointed out to me a village to the north-east of the track, and informed me that all its inhabitants were robbers and murderers. In fact upon the road, we came across a poor boy crying, and bruised all over. We asked him what was the matter. He pointed to three men in the distance who were running away, and said they had beaten him and stolen his money, two krans, and two pomegranates. Sure enough, when we galloped to the men and stopped them they did not wait to be accused but handed me at once both fruit and money to be returned to their rightful owner.

These folks had very brutal faces, framed in flowing locks of shaggy hair. They were garbed in long thick coats of white felt, made entirely of one piece, and quite stiff, with sleeves sticking out at the sides, into which the arms were never to be inserted. There were two red and blue small circular ornamentations at the bottom of the coat in front, and one in the centre of the back, as on Japanese kimonos.

We began to see more habitations now, and about one mile north-east of the track we perceived the villages of Esmalawat, Aliabad, and Sher-i-fabad,—the latter quite a large place. We still went on over sand and white salt deposits.

Poor Sadek was so tired and sleepy that he fell off his horse a couple of times. The soil got very stony on getting near Kushkuhyeh (altitude 4,900 feet), where we entered the Chappar khana exactly at noon.

The contractor of the postal service lived at this village, and he was extremely civil. As many as eight horses were in his stable, and he ordered that the best should be given me. He entertained me to tea and took the keenest interest in my rifles. He also possessed one of the familiar discarded British Martini military rifles, specially decorated for the Persian market—a rifle worth at its most a pound sterling, or two, but for which he had paid no less than 100 tomans (about £20). The smugglers of firearms must have made huge profits on the sale of these antiquated weapons, for firearms are among the few articles for which large sums of ready money can be obtained in Persia.

This particular man now took a great fancy to my .256 Mannlicher, and jokingly said he would not let me proceed until I had sold it to him. He produced large sums in solid silver to tempt me, about four times the value of the rifle, and was greatly upset when I assured him that I would not part with the rifle at all.

When I left, he accompanied me part of the way, some few hundred yards, and he took with him his Martini and a belt full of cartridges; his servant who followed him was also similarly armed. On inquiring of him why master and servant loaded themselves with arms and ammunition to go such a short distance, he replied that it was not safe for him to go unarmed even one yard out of his house. One of his friends had been murdered only a few days before, and one never knows in Persia when one's turn will come next. In out-of-the-way places in Persia private revenge is extremely common, which generally takes the form of shooting one's adversary in the back.

There seemed to be abundance of water at Kushkuhyeh, and the fields were properly irrigated. Cultivation seemed prosperous, and vast cotton plantations were to be seen all round. When we passed, hundreds of men, women and children were busy taking in the cotton, and scores of camels, donkeys, sheep and goats grazing were dotting the green patch in the landscape. This gay scene of active life and verdure was all the more refreshing after the many miles of sand and gravel and barren hills of which we had grown so weary since leaving Yezd.

Two hours were wasted for lunch, and off we went again. On leaving behind Kushkuhyeh we also left behind vegetation, and again we sank in sand. A few tamarisk shrubs were scattered here and there on the large plain we were traversing, bounded on all sides by distant mountains.

Three and a half farsakhs (about 13 miles) saw us at Hemmatawat, a large walled enclosure.

At 6.30 P.M. we entered the small town of Barawamad (Bahramabad)—altitude 5,150 feet—or Rafsenju as it is called now by its new name. This is a fast-growing place of quite modern origin, and it owes most of its prosperity to the extensive cultivation of cotton, exported from here direct to the Persian Gulf and India.

Besides the route on which we are travelling there are several other tracks leading out of Barawamad. A minor one runs in a north-easterly direction, over the Dehring Mountains to the Seroenan district, where many villages are to be found, and then turns sharply south-east *via* Zerend to Kerman. It is also possible, when once one has crossed into Seroenan, to continue to Lawah (Rawar) and then, across the Salt Desert, to Meshed or to Birjand.

To the Persian Gulf there are three tracks. One south-west by west to Sher-i-balek, from which place the traveller has the option to travel to Bushire (*via* Shiraz) or to Lingah or to Bandar Abbas *via* Forg. Two different tracks, to Reshitabad and Bidu, join at Melekabad (south-west) and these eventually enter the Kerman-Shiraz-Bushire track; while another track, the most in use, goes almost due south, direct to Bidu, skirting the Pariz Mountains on their westerly slopes. This track, too, crosses the Kerman-Shiraz route at Saidabad, and proceeds due south to Bandar Abbas.

The few Hindoo merchants of Kerman come here during the cotton season to make their purchases and send their goods direct to Bandar Abbas for shipment to India. Pottery of an inferior kind is manufactured at Rafsenju.

We left the Chappar khana at midnight in a terrific cold wind, and this time on shockingly bad horses. They were tired and lame, the cold wind probably intensifying the rheumatic pains from which most of them were suffering. The country was undulating and we gradually rose to 5,700 feet. The horses gave us no end of trouble and we had to walk the greater portion of the night.

Sadek, five feet two in height, and the Chappar boy, six feet two, came to words and soon after to most sonorous blows. To add to our comfort, the Chappar boy, who got the worst of the scrimmage, ran away, and it was only at sunrise that we perceived him again a long way off following us, not daring to get too near. Eventually, by dint of sending him peaceful messages by a caravan man who passed us, Sadek induced him to return, and still struggling in the sand of the desolate country all round us, and our horses sinking quite deep into it, we managed to drag men, horses, and loads into Kafter-han (Kebuter-han)—altitude 5,680 feet—at 8.30 in the morning, where we were glad to get relays of fresh steeds. We had gone about twenty-eight miles from the last station.

A few mud huts, an ice store-house, a flour mill, a high building, said to have been an arsenal, the usual caravanserai, and a dingy Chappar khana were all, quite all one could rest one's eye upon at Kafter-han. There was some cultivation, but nothing very luxuriant. The few inhabitants were quite interested in the sudden appearance of a *ferenghi* (a foreigner). The women, who were not veiled here, were quite good-looking, one girl particularly, whose photograph I snatched before she had time to run away to hide herself—the usual effect of a camera on Persian women, quite the reverse to its effects on the European fair sex.

We left almost directly on better animals, and proceeded south-east having lofty rugged hills to the north-east, east, and south of us, with the usual high sand accumulations upon their sides. To the south-east we could just discern the distant mountains near Kerman. The track itself, on the sandy embankment at the foot of the hillside to the south-west, is rather high up and tortuous, owing to a very long salt marsh which fills the lower portion of the valley during the rainy weather and makes progress in a straight line impossible. But now, owing to the absolute absence of rain for months and months, the marsh was perfectly dry and formed a flat white plastered stretch of clay, sand and salt, as smooth as a billiard-table, and not unlike an immense floor prepared for tennis-courts. The dried salt mud was extremely hard, our horses' hoofs leaving scarcely a mark on it. I reckoned the breadth of this flat, white expanse at one and a half miles, and its length a little over eleven miles. Two high peaks stood in front of us to the south-east, the Kuh Djupahr, forming part of a long range extending in a south-east direction.

At a distance of four farsakhs (about thirteen miles), and directly on the other side of the dried-up salt stretch, we came to another Chappar khana, at the village of Robat. There were a good many women about in front of the huge caravanserai, and they looked very ridiculous in the tiny short skirts like those of ballet girls, and not particularly clean, over tight trousers quite adhering to the legs.

We have the same mountains on both sides, and we continue over undulating ground, the valley getting somewhat narrower as we proceed towards Baghīh. Six or seven miles from Kafter-han was Esmaratabad village, a mass of ruins, and ten miles or so a large village, still in fair preservation, Sadi, with some vegetation, principally wheat. The track lay mostly over a stony, barren desert, with here and there, miles and miles apart, a forced patch of green.

Baghīh, our last halt before reaching Kerman, was nine farsakhs from Kafter-han. It stood at an elevation of 5,740 feet, and had plenty of excellent water. The village was large, with handsome walled gardens and nicely-kept wheat-fields all round. The inhabitants were most affable and civil, and the women and children particularly simple and attractive. The girls were attired in longer and more graceful skirts than the damsels of Robat, and did not leave the leg exposed even as high as the knee. Over it they had an ample shirt with wide short sleeves, showing their gracefully modelled and well rounded arms, adorned with metal bracelets. On the head was a kerchief neatly bound quite tight over the head by means of a ribbon.

It was not possible to get fresh horses here, and mine were very tired or I would have continued to Kerman the same evening, completing the journey from Yezd (220 miles) in three days. We had arrived early in the afternoon, and had I not been compelled to take on the tired horses for the remaining four farsakhs (13 miles) I could have easily reached Kerman before the gates of the city were closed at sunset. As it was, I had to give it up, and had to sleep the night at Baghīh, making an early start on Wednesday, the 30th.

Baghīh is actually south-west of Kerman, and the track makes this long detour to avoid the Bademan Mountains to the north. It thus passes over comparatively level land in the valley between that range and the Kuh Djupahr, the track turning here sharply to the north-east, in which direction, when we get to the highest point of the track (5,980 feet) one and a half farsakhs from Baghīh, we can almost discern Kerman in the distance. Except to the north-west we have high mountains all round, the highest being the Djupahr to the south-east, and of which we now get a most lovely view, and also of the whole Kerman plain with its innumerable semi-spherical sand-hills.

At the foot of the Djupahr below us we see the two villages of Kheirabad and Akhibarabad, with many trees and some cultivation round them. On descending into the Kerman plain we have deceiving effects of mirage, lovely lakes on both sides and streams of water, but on the rising of a gentle breeze, limpid lakes and streams suddenly disappear, and the whole plain is nothing but a big undulating stretch of yellow sand, until we arrive within almost a stone's-throw of the city gates of Kerman.

At 11 A.M. on Wednesday, October the 30th, I halted at the palatial Chappar khana of Kerman, just outside the city wall, in a handsome garden, having accomplished the journey from Yezd in four

CHAPTER XLII

Kerman—The *Ark* or citadel—Civility of the natives—Europeans—The British Consulate—Major Phillott—H. E. Ala-el-Mulk, Governor of Kerman—Soldiers—Teaching music to recruits—Preparation for the campaign against the Beluch—Cloth manufacture.

It was my intention to pay my respects to the British Consul for whom I had letters of introduction from the Minister at Teheran, and I at once proceeded through the city, entering first the "Ark" or citadel, and then the south-west gate with two side columns of green and blue tiles in a spiral design and pointed archway, into the Meidan—a fine rectangular square of great length and breadth. Sentries posted at the gates of the city and at the sides of the square saluted, and also many of the people along the road. This extraordinary civility was very refreshing in a country where one only expects extreme rudeness from the lower classes.

We entered the vaulted bazaar, the main big artery of Kerman city, intersected about half-way by a tortuous street from north to south and by other minor narrow lanes, and crowded with people, donkeys, camels and mules; and here, too, one was rather surprised to see various merchants get up in their shops salaaming as I passed, and to receive a "Salameleko" and a bow from most men on the way. The bazaar itself, being in appearance more ancient than those of Yezd, Isfahan and Teheran, was more alluring and had many quaint bits. It bore, however, very much the same characteristics as all other bazaars of Persia. At the end of it on the north-east we emerged into an open space with picturesque awnings, suspended mats, and spread umbrellas shading innumerable baskets of delicious green figs, trays of grapes, and pomegranates, piles of water-melons and vegetables of all sorts.



H. E. ALA-EL-MULK, GOVERNOR OF KERMAN, IN HIS PALACE.

No Europeans live within the wall of Kerman city itself, and at the time of my visit there were only four Europeans altogether residing in the neighbourhood of the town. Two missionaries, husband and wife; a gentleman who, misled by representations, had been induced to come from India to dig artesian wells at great expense—in a country where the natives are masters at finding water and making aqueducts—and our most excellent Consul, Major Phillott, one of the most practical and sensible men that ever lived.

The Consulate was at Zeris or Zirif, some little distance to the east of the town. We passed through a graveyard on leaving the inhabited district, and had in front of us some ancient fortifications on the rocky hills to the south, which we skirted, and then came to some huge conical ice-houses—very old, but still in excellent preservation. We passed the solidly-built and foreign-looking gateway of the Bagh-i-Zeris, and a little further at the end of a short avenue the British flag could be seen flying upon a gate.

As I came upon him a ragged infantry soldier, who, being at his dinner, was busy licking his fingers, sprang to his feet and made a military salute. Having passed through a court and a garden and a series of dismantled rooms I found myself in the Consulate, where I was greeted effusively by Major Phillott, who had no idea I was coming, and who, owing to my being very much sun-tanned, had at first mistaken me for a Persian! He would not hear of my remaining at the Chappar khana, and most kindly sent at once for all my luggage to be brought up to the Consulate. The hospitality of Englishmen in Persia is really unbounded.

H. E. Ala-el-Mulk, Governor of Kerman, called on the Consul that same afternoon, and I was able to present the letter I had brought to him. Having lived long in Europe Ala-el-Mulk is a most fluent French scholar, and, being a man of considerable talent, sense, and honesty he is rather adverse to the empty show and pomp which is ever deemed the necessary accompaniment of high-placed officials in Persia. He can be seen walking through the town with only a servant or two, or riding about inspecting every nook of his city hardly attended at all. This, curiously enough, has not shocked the natives as people feared, but, on the contrary, has inspired them with intense respect for the new Governor, whose tact, gentleness, consideration and justice were fully appreciated by the whole town; so that, after all, it is pleasant to notice that the lower classes of Persia have more common sense and power of differentiation than they have hitherto been credited with.

"When I want anything well done," said the Governor to me, "I do it myself. I want the welfare of my people and am only glad when I can see with my own eyes that they get it. I inspect my soldiers, I see them drilled before me; I go to the bazaar to talk to the people, and any one can come to talk to me. Nobody need be afraid of coming to me; I am ever ready to listen to all."

Although this innovation in the system of impressing the crowds created somewhat of a sensation at first, the Governor soon managed to impress the people with his own personality, and he is now

extraordinarily popular among all classes, except the semi-official, who cannot carry on their usual extortions with impunity.

He asked me to go and inspect his troops, whom he had drilled before his own eyes every morning, and undoubtedly, of all the soldiers I had seen in Persia, they were the only ones—barring the Cossack regiments drilled by Russians—that had a real military appearance and were trained according to a method. They were better dressed, better fed, and more disciplined even than the soldiers of Teheran.

The teaching of music to recruits for the band was quite interesting. The musical notes were written on a black-board and the young fellows were made to sing them out in a chorus until they had learnt the whole melody by heart. The boys had most musical voices and quite good musical ears, while their powers of retention of what they were taught were quite extraordinary, when it was considered that these fellows were recruited from the lowest and most ignorant classes.

The garrison of Kerman was armed with Vrandel rifles, an old, discarded European pattern, but quite serviceable. Anyhow, all the men possessed rifles of one and the same pattern, which was an advantage not noticeable in the Teheran troops, for instance. For Persians, they went through their drill in an accurate and business-like manner, mostly to the sound of three drums, and also with a capital band playing European brass instruments.

The Governor took special delight in showing me several tents which he had had specially manufactured for his approaching campaign, in conjunction with British troops from British Beluchistan, against marauding Beluch tribes who had been very troublesome for some time, and who, being so close to the frontier, were able to evade alike Persian, Beluch, and British law, until a joint movement against them was made from west and east. H. E. Ala-el-Mulk told me that he intended to command the expedition himself.

Ala-el-Mulk, a man extraordinarily courteous and simple in manner, was former Persian Ambassador in Constantinople. Through no fault of his own, owing to certain customs prevalent at the Sultan's court, the Shah during his visit to Constantinople was unreasonably displeased, and the Ambassador was recalled. The Governorship of distant Kerman was given him, but a man like Ala-el-Mulk, one of the ablest men in Persia, would be more useful in a higher position nearer the capital, if not in the capital itself. Kerman is a very out-of-the-way place, and of no very great importance just yet, although, if Persia develops as she should, it will not be many years from the present time before Kerman becomes a place of great importance to England.

However, Ala-el-Mulk is, above all, a philosopher, and he certainly makes the best of his opportunities. He has to contend with many difficulties, intrigue, false dealing, and corruption being rampant even among some of the higher officials in the town; but with his sound judgment and patience he certainly manages to keep things going in a most satisfactory manner.

Besides his official business, and with the aid of his nephew, he superintends the manufacture, as we have already seen, of the best, the most characteristically Persian carpets of the finest quality and dyes. There are a great many looms in the buildings adjacent to the Palace and hundreds of hands employed in the Governor's factories. He also possesses a good collection of very ancient carpets, from which the modern ones are copied.

I returned his visit at his Palace, where the Consul and I were received most cordially and had a lengthy and most interesting conversation with his Excellency. Then he showed me all the buildings in the Ark.

Kerman is celebrated for its cloth manufacture and felts. The cloth is of fine worsted, and is generally in pieces six yards long by three quarters of a yard wide. It is much used by the natives, both for hangings and for making clothes for men and women, being very soft and durable. Embroidered turbans and kamarbands are made from these cloths, especially in white cloth, generally of a fine quality. The process of weaving these cloths, called inappropriately "Kerman shawls," is identical with that of the loom described at the village of Bambis in Chapter XXXVI. The material used for the best quality is the selected fine wool, growing next to the skin of goats. These dyed threads are cut into short lengths and woven into the fabric by the supple and agile fingers of the children working, packed tight together, at the looms. Some of the best cloths, not more than ten feet in length, take as long as a month per foot in their manufacture, and they realise very high prices, even as much as nine or ten pounds sterling a yard. The design on the more elaborate ones is, as in the carpets, learnt by heart, the stitches being committed to memory like the words of a poem. This is not, however, the case with the simpler and cheaper ones, which are more carelessly done, a boy reading out the design from a pattern or a book.



TILED WALLS AND PICTURESQUE WINDOWS IN THE MADRASSAH, KERMAN.



SIRKAR AGHA'S SON, THE HEAD OF THE SHEIKHI SECT, KERMAN.

The carpet factories of Kerman are very extensive, the process being similar to that already described in a previous chapter.

CHAPTER XLIII

The Madrassah—"Peace on Abraham"—The Hammam—Trade caravanserais—The Hindoo caravanserai—Parsees—Ancient fortifications—The Kala-i-Dukhtar, or virgin fort—Speculation—The Kala-Ardeshir—A deep well—Why it was made.

A visit to the Madrassah on the north side of the bazaar was extremely interesting, it being the best preserved building of that type I had so far seen in Persia. The Consul and I were shown round it by the Son of Sirkar Agha, the head of the Sheikhi sect, a most dignified individual with long black cloak and ample white turban, and with a beard dyed as black as ink. He conversed most intelligently and took great delight in showing every nook of the building.

The college is only some ninety years old. Its courts, its walls, its rooms, its dome, are most beautifully tiled all over, and, strange to say, it is kept in good repair and the gardens are well looked after. There is a handsome lecture-hall, with four strong receptacles high up in the corners of the room, and fret-work at the windows, not unlike Egyptian *musharabeahs*. Four very high ventilating shafts are constructed over the buildings to keep the rooms cool.

"Peace on Abraham" reads an elaborate inscription, quoted from the Koran, but applying in this case, Sirkar Agha's son tells me, to the founder of the institution. There are other inscriptions on the towers and ventilating shafts.

At the time of my visit the number of pupils was two hundred. The adjoining Hammam belonging to the College was, to our astonishment, also shown us. Such baths are underground and are reached by steps or by a slippery incline. These particular ones were very superior and had a beautifully tiled entrance, but the door itself was small and always kept closed. The first room was domed with a fountain playing in the centre and platforms, three feet high all round, on the matting of which lay spread a great many cotton towels, red and blue. The only light came from a centre aperture in the dome. High earthen jugs stood artistically resting against one another, and a few people were dressing or undressing preparatory to taking or after having taken a bath. This was all that was done in this room.

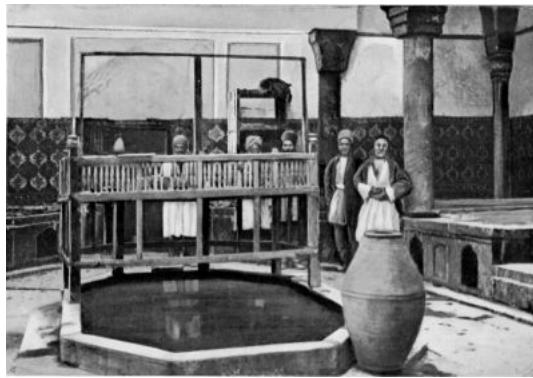
Through a narrow slippery passage we entered another room, where the steamy heat was considerable. There were small sections round the room divided by a wall, like the cells of a monastery, and in each cell was a tap of cold water. Then we ascended through a small aperture into another and warmer room, spacious enough, but stifling with a sickening acid odour of perspiration and fumes of over-heated human skins. The steam heat was so great that one saw everything in a haze, and one felt one's own pores expand and one's clothes get quite wet with the absorbed damp in the atmosphere over-saturated with moisture.

There were two or three men, stripped and only with a loin cloth, lying down flat on their backs,—one undergoing massage, being thumped all over; another having the hair of his head and beard dyed jet-black. The reason that the Persian hair-dyes are so permanent is principally because the dyeing is done at such a high temperature and in such moist atmosphere which allows the dye to get well into the hair. When the same dyes are used at a normal temperature the results are never so successful. Further, a third man was being cleansed by violent rubbing. He needed it badly; at least, judging by the amount of black stuff that rolled from his skin under the operator's fingers. The attendants, too, barring a loin-cloth, were naked.

With perspiration streaming down my cheeks I took the photographs here reproduced, and then proceeded to a yet hotter small room—as suffocating a place as one may wish to enter in one's lifetime, or after! One received a positive scorching blow in the face as one entered it, the heat was so great. This is the last chamber, and in a corner is a tap of cold water with which the skin is repeatedly rinsed and made to sweat several times until the pores are considered absolutely clean. There were two people lying down in a semi-unconscious state, and although I was only there a few minutes I came out quite limp and rag-like. It ruined my watch, and only by very careful nursing I was able to save my camera from falling to pieces. On returning to the previous hot chamber it seemed quite cool by comparison, and when we emerged again into the open air, thermometer about 90° in the shade, one felt quite chilled.

The various trade caravanserais, of which there were over a dozen in Kerman on either side of the main bazaar street, were quite interesting. They were large courts with high platforms, six to ten feet high, all round them, the centre well, enclosed by them, being tightly packed with camels, mules and donkeys. Above on the broad platform lay all the packs of merchandise which had arrived from Birjand and Afghanistan, from Beluchistan or from India via Bandar Abbas. The shops and store

rooms were neat and had wood-work in front, with gigantic padlocks of a primitive make. Some, however, had neat little English padlocks.



THE INTERIOR OF A HAMMAM OR BATH—FIRST ROOM.

The most interesting to us, but not the most beautiful, was the Hindoo caravanserai, where some forty British Hindoo merchants carried on their commerce. The place looked old and untidy, and the shops overcrowded with cheap articles of foreign make, such as are commonly to be seen in India,—paraffin lamps, knives, enamelled ware, cotton goods, indigo, tea, sugar and calicos being prominent in the shops. The piece goods come mostly from Germany and Austria, the cottons from Manchester.

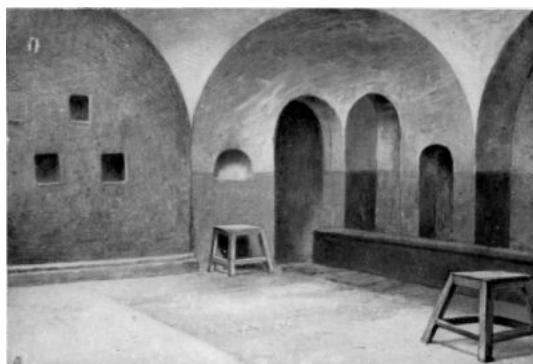
The Hindoos were very civil and entertained us to tea, water melon, and a huge tray of sweets, while a crowd outside gazed at the unusual sight of Europeans visiting the caravanserais. The merchants said that the trade in cotton, wool, gum and dates was fairly good, and that, taking things all round, matters went well, but they had a great many complaints—they would not be Hindoos if they had not—of petty quarrels to be settled among themselves and with the Persians. These, of course, arose mostly out of matters of money. They seemed otherwise quite jolly and happy, notwithstanding the exaggerated hats and curious costumes they are compelled to wear, so that they may be distinguished at a glance from the Persians themselves.

Here, too, as has been already said, there is a small Parsee community of about 3,000 souls. They are, however, rather scattered nowadays, and are not so prominent as in Yezd.

The side streets leading out of the bazaar are narrow and dingy, covered up in places with awnings and matting. There is very little else worth seeing in the city, but the many ruins to the east of the town and the ancient fortifications are well worth a visit.

It is to the east of the city that the ancient fortifications are found, on the most western portion of the crescent-shaped barrier of mountains. According to some natives the smaller fort, the Kala-i-Dukhtar, or Virgin fort, on the terminal point of the range, at one time formed part of ancient Kerman. The fort, the Kala-i-Dukhtar is on the ridge of the hill, with a fairly well-preserved castellated wall and a large doorway in the perpendicular rock at the end of the hill range.

In a long semicircular wall at the foot of the hill a row of niches can be seen, but whether these made part of an ancient stable for horses, or were used for other purposes, I could not quite ascertain. Some people said that they were a portion of a *hammam*; others said they might have been cells of a prison, but what remained of them was not sufficient to allow one to come to a satisfactory conclusion.



THE HOT ROOM IN A PERSIAN BATH.



THE KALA-I-DUKHTAR OR VIRGIN FORT.

The outside wall of the fort was very high, and had strong battlements and towers. Inside the lower wall at the foot of the hill was a moat from twenty-five to thirty feet wide and fifteen feet deep. The upper wall went along the summit of two ridges and was parallel to the lower one, which had four large circular turrets, and extended down to and over the flat for some 120 yards. There was another extensive but much demolished fortress to the east of this on the lower part of the hill range, guarding the other side of the entrance of the pass, and this, too, had two large walled enclosures in the plain at its foot. A great many fragments of pottery with angular geometrical patterns and small circles upon them were to be found here and in the neighbourhood.

The fort of Kala-i-Dukhtar is attributed by the people to King Ardashir, and is one of the three mentioned by Mukaddasi in the tenth century, who, in describing the city of Bardasir, unmistakably identified with the present Kerman, speaks of the three famous impregnable castles—the *Hisn* defended by a ditch, evidently the one above described, directly outside the city gate, and the old castle, the Kala-i-Kuh, on the crest of the hill. It has been assumed that the third castle mentioned by Mukaddasi, was where the *Ark* or citadel is now, but personally I doubt whether this is correct. The citadel, the residence of the present Governor, is to my mind of much more recent origin. There is every sign to make one doubt whether Kerman extended in those days as far west as the citadel, which to-day occupies the most western point outside the city; whereas in the accounts of Mukaddasi one would be led to understand that the third fortress was well within the city near a great mosque. In Persian chronicles, too, the Hill Castle, the old, and the new castles are often referred to, but personally I believe that these three castles were adjoining one another on the same chain of hills.

An ascent to the Kala Ardeshir well repays the trouble of getting there. It is not possible to reach the Castle from the south side, where the rocky hills are very precipitous, and even from the north it is not easy of access. On the north-west side, facing the British Consulate, there is a somewhat narrow and slippery track in the rock along a ravine, by which—in many places "on all fours"—one can get up to the top.

The gateway is very much blocked with sand, but squeezing through a small aperture one can get inside the wall, within which are several small courts, and a series of tumbled-down small buildings. In the walls can still be seen some of the receptacles in which grain and food were formerly stored.



GRAVEYARD AND KALA-I-DUKHTAR OR VIRGIN FORT, KERMAN.

Although the exterior of the castle, resting on the solid rock and built of sun-dried bricks so welded together by age as to form a solid mass, appears in fair preservation from a distance, when one examines the interior it is found to be in a dreadful state of decay. The courts and spaces between the walls are now filled up with sand. There is a well of immense depth, bored in the rock, the fort standing some five hundred feet above the plain; but although this is said by some writers to have been a way of escape from this fortress to as distant a place as Khabis, some forty-five miles as the crow flies to the east of Kerman, I never heard this theory expounded in Kerman itself, but in any case, it is rather strange that the well should have been made so small in diameter as hardly to allow the passage of a man, its shaft being bored absolutely perpendicular for hundreds and hundreds of feet and its sides perfectly smooth, so that an attempt to go down it would be not a way of escape from death, but positive suicide. The well was undoubtedly made to supply the fort with water whenever it became impracticable to use the larger wells and tanks constructed at the foot of the hills within the fortification walls.

CHAPTER XLIV

The deserted city of Farmidan—More speculation—The Afghan invasion—Kerman surrenders to Agha Muhammed Khan—A cruel oppressor—Luft-Ali-Khan to the rescue—The Zoroastrians—Mahala Giabr—Second Afghan invasion—Luft-Ali-Khan's escape—Seventy thousand human eyes—Women in slavery—Passes—An outpost—Fire temples—Gigantic inscriptions—A stiff rock climb—A pilgrimage for sterile women—A Russian picnic—A Persian dinner—Fatabad—The trials of abundance—A Persian menu—Rustamabad—Lovely fruit garden.

THE very large deserted city of Farmidan lies directly south of the mountainous crescent on which are found the fortifications described in the previous chapter. The houses of the city do not appear very ancient, their walls being in excellent preservation, but not so the domed roofs which have nearly all fallen in. The houses are entirely constructed of sun-dried mud bricks, now quite soldered together by age and reduced into a compact mass. A few of the more important dwellings have two storeys, and all the buildings evidently had formerly domed roofs. In order that the conformation of each house may be better understood, a plan of one typical building is given. On a larger or smaller scale they all resembled one another very closely, and were not unlike the Persian houses of to-day.

There was a broad main road at the foot of the mountains along the southern side of which the city had been built, with narrow and tortuous streets leading out of the principal thoroughfare. Curiously enough, however, this city appeared not to have had a wall round it like most other cities one sees in Persia. It is possible that the inhabitants relied on taking refuge in the strength and safety of the forts above, but more probable seems the theory that Farmidan was a mere settlement, a place of refuge of the Zoroastrians who had survived the terrible slaughter by Agha Muhammed Khan.

It may be remembered that when the Afghan determined to regain his throne or die, he came over the Persian frontier from Kandahar. He crossed the Salt Desert from Sistan, losing thousands of men, horses and camels on the way, and with a large army still under his command, eventually occupied Kerman.

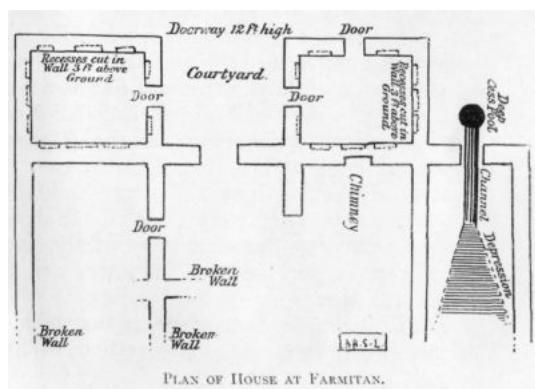
Kerman was in those days a most flourishing commercial centre, with bazaars renowned for their beauty and wealth, and its forts were well manned and considered impregnable. So unexpected, however, was the appearance of such a large army that the inhabitants made no resistance and readily bowed to the sovereignty of Agha Muhammed. They were brutally treated by the oppressors. Luft-Ali-Khan hastened from the coast to the relief of the city, and fiercely attacked and defeated the Afghan invader, who was compelled to retreat to Kandahar; but Kerman city, which had undergone terrible oppression from the entry of the Afghans, fared no better at the hands of the Persians. The Zoroastrians of Kerman particularly were massacred wholesale or compelled to adopt the Mahomedan religion.

It is not unlikely—although I assume no responsibility for the statement—that at that time the Zoroastrians, who were still numerous in Kerman, driven from their homes by the invading Afghan and Persian armies, settled a few miles from the city, unable to proceed further afield owing to the desolate nature of the country all round. With no animals, no means of subsistence, it would have been impossible for them with their families to go much further *en masse* in a country where food and even water are not easily obtainable. The name of the town—Farmidan—also would point to the conclusion that it had been inhabited by Fars, and the age attributed to the city by the natives corresponds roughly with the epoch of the Afghan invasion.

To the north of Kerman city we have another similar settlement, now deserted, Mahala-Giabr (a corruption of Guebre), of which there is little doubt that it was inhabited by Zoroastrians. One of the reasons that these cities are now deserted may be found in the fact that Agha Muhammed, having raised another army in Afghanistan, proceeded a second time to the conquest of Persia. The Zoroastrians, who had fared worse at the hands of Luft-Ali-Khan than under the Afghan rule, were persuaded to join Agha Muhammed against their Perso-Arab oppressors, in hopes of obtaining some relief to their misery, but history does not relate what became of them. They were never heard of again. One fact only is known, that very few of those living in Kerman at the time succeeded in escaping massacre. That previous to this the Zoroastrians must have been very numerous in Kerman can be judged by the remains of many fire-temples to be seen, especially in the neighbourhood of the city.



RUINED HOUSES OF FARMITAN.



PLAN OF HOUSE AT FARMITAN.

PLAN OF HOUSE AT FARMITAN.

In his second invasion of Persia Agha Muhammed again reached Kerman in 1795 and besieged the city defended by Luft-Ali-Khan. The inhabitants, who had suffered at the hands of their saviours as much if not more than at those of their oppressors, made a half-hearted resistance and eventually, in the thick of the fighting, the city gates were opened by treachery. Luft-Ali-Khan and a handful of his faithful men fought like lions in the streets of the city, but at last, seeing that all hope of victory had vanished, and forsaken by most of his men, Luft-Ali-Khan rode full gallop in the midst of the Afghans. According to chronicles, he defiantly ran the gauntlet with only three followers, and they

were able to force their way through the Kajar post and escape to Bam-Narmanshir, the most eastern part of the Kerman province, on the borders of Sistan.

Agha Muhammed demanded the surrender of Luft-Ali-Khan; the city was searched to find him, and when it was learned that he had succeeded in effecting an escape, the wrath of the Afghan knew no bounds. The people having declared that they could not find Luft-Ali, he ordered 70,000 eyes of the inhabitants to be brought to him on trays, and is said to have counted them himself with the point of a dagger. But this punishment he believed to be still too lenient. A general massacre of the men was commanded, and no less than 20,000 women and children were made into slaves. To this day the proverbially easy morals of the Kerman women are attributed to the Afghan invasion, when the women became the concubines of soldiers and lost all respect for themselves; and so is the importation of the dreadful disease which in its most virulent form is pitifully common in a great portion of the population of the present Kerman city. According to some the city was razed to the ground, but whether this was so or not, there is no doubt that Kerman has never recovered from the blow received, and from the subsequent oppression at the hands of this barbarous conqueror.

In the south-west part of the mountainous crescent are three very low passes, by which the hill range can be crossed. One pass between the Kala-i-Dukhtar and the Kala-Ardeshir forts; one between the Kala-Ardeshir and the ruins south of it along the southern continuation of the range; and the third at the most southern point of the crescent, where the precipitous rocky hill-ranges are separated by a narrow gap, level with the flat plains on either side. One can still see the remains of a ruined wall on the east side of this entrance, a round, outpost mud turret, with other buildings and a large walled enclosure directly outside the pass on the flat to the south; while on the lower slope of the eastern mountain stands a tall square building, now roofless, erected on a strong quadrangular base with corner turrets. It has three pointed arch doorways (east, west, south), almost as tall as the building itself, and by the side of these are found high and broad windows in couples. This building appears to be of a much more recent date than the underlying castle filled up with earth on which it stands. It has rather the appearance of a fire temple.

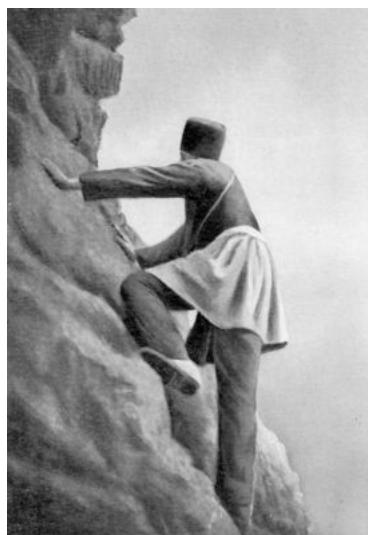
On going through the pass we find ourselves in the centre basin formed by the mountainous crescent, and here we have another deserted settlement smaller than Farmidan, also to all appearance not more than a century old, and directly under the lee of the precipitous rocky mountains. A high building of a rich burnt-sienna colour, with a dome of stone and mortar—the latter said to have been mixed with camel's milk, which gives the mortar greater consistency—is to be seen here. This, too, is supposed to have been a fire temple. Its base is quadrangular, with two tiers of three windows each. A small lateral wall is next to the entrance, but nothing is to be seen in the interior except the bare walls.

East of this, on the face of the cliff and several hundred feet above the valley, one is shown a gigantic inscription, "Ya Ali," in white characters depicted on the rock. The letters are so big that they can be seen from Kerman, about three miles off. This is a pilgrimage well worth making, for they say every wish of those who climb up to the inscription will come true. Two qualities are required—a very steady head and the agility of a monkey. The angle of the rock is very steep,—almost vertical, as can be seen on the left side of the photograph, which I took from the site of the inscription looking down upon the ruined city and the whole Kerman plain. The only way by which,—on all fours,—one can climb up is so worn, greasy and slippery, owing to the many pilgrims who have glided up and down, that it is most difficult to get a grip on the rock.

Yet the going-up is much easier than the coming down. The full-page illustration shows the man who accompanied me just about to reach the inscription,—I took the photograph as I clung to the rock just below him, as can be seen from the distortion of his lower limbs caused by my being unable to select a suitable position from which to take the photograph. We were then clinging to the rock with a drop below us in a straight line of several hundred feet.

We reached the inscription safely enough, and sat on the edge of the precipice—the only place where we could sit—with our legs dangling over it. Screened as we were in deep shadow, we obtained a magnificent bird's-eye view of the Kerman plain, brilliantly lighted by the morning sun, and of the forts to our left (south-west) and the many ruins down below between ourselves and Kerman city. A bed of a stream, now dry, wound its way from these mountains to almost the centre of the plain, where it lost itself in the sand beyond a cluster of ruined buildings. Undoubtedly at some previous time this torrent carried a good volume of water to the village, and this accounts for the deserted settlement being found there.

The letters of the inscription were ten feet high, painted white.



A STEEP ROCK CLIMB, KERMAN.

Photograph of Guide taken by the Author on reaching the Inscription several hundred feet above the plain.

The man who had climbed up with me related an amusing incident of the occasion when H. E. the Governor of the city was persuaded to climb to inspect the inscription. Hauled up with the assistance of ropes and servants, he became so nervous when he reached the inscription and looked down upon the precipice below that he offered a huge reward if they took him down again alive. Although otherwise a brave man he was unaccustomed to mountaineering, and owing to the great height, had been seized with vertigo and was absolutely helpless and unable to move. With considerable difficulty he was hauled down and safely conveyed to his palace.

The descent presented more difficulty than the ascent, and one's shoes had to be removed to effect it in more safety. Eventually we reached the bottom again where, in a gully is a small ruined temple and a mud hut or two.

A great many women, who from this point had been watching us come down along the face of the cliff, stampeded away, giggling, at our approach, and on my asking why so many representatives of the fair sex were to be found here—there were lots more dotting the landscape below in their white or black chudders, all converging towards this point—it was explained that, a few yards off, was a rock possessing marvellous properties. The rock in question forms part of the mountain-side, and in its natural formation coarsely suggests, much magnified, the effigy of a component of feminine anatomy. At the foot of it there was an inscription and certain offerings, while above it, in a recess, a large wax candle was burning. Near this stone a stunted tree was to be seen, laden with bits of red and white rags and various kinds of hair—a most unedifying sight.

This is a well-known pilgrimage for sterile women, who, after certain exorcisms in front of and on the divine stone, and a night or two spent in the neighbouring ruins, are said infallibly to become prolific. The neighbouring ruins, it should be added, are the favourite night resort of the Kerman young men in search of romantic adventure, and a most convenient rendezvous for flirtations; but whether the extraordinary qualities of prolificness are really due to the occult power of the magic stone or to the less mystic charms of nights spent away from home, the reader is no doubt better able to discriminate than I. Judging by the long strings of ladies of all ages to be seen going on the pilgrimage, one would almost come to the conclusion that half the women of Kerman are in a bad plight, or else that the other half only is a good lot!

Much unsuspected amusement was provided to the natives by a Russian political agent who had visited Kerman a few weeks before I did, with the intention—it was stated—of starting a Consulate there and a caravanserai to further Russian trade. Previous to his departure, attracted merely by the lovely view from the pilgrimage stone, and absolutely unaware of what misconstruction might be placed on his hospitality, the Russian gave a picnic at this spot to the tiny European community of Kerman. Needless to say, the evil-minded Persians of course put a wrong construction upon the whole thing, and a good deal of merriment was caused among the natives—who may lack many other qualities, but not wit—by the sahibs going *en masse* to the pilgrimage.

The Russian picnic was the talk of the bazaar when I was there, and will probably remain so for some little time.

We will now leave ruins and puzzling pilgrimages alone, and will accept an invitation to a substantial Persian dinner with Hussein-Ali-Khan, known by the title of Nusrat-al-Mamalik, and probably the richest man in the province of Kerman. At great expense and trouble, this man bought an English carriage, for the pleasure of driving in which he actually made a road several miles long. He kindly sent the carriage for the Consul and me to drive to his place, and had relays of horses half-way on the road so that we could gallop the whole way. He has planted trees all along the new road, and brought water down from the hills by a canal along the roadside in order to provide sufficient moisture to make them grow.

When we reached Fatabad—that was the name of the village close to which our host's country residence stood—we alighted at a most beautiful avenue of high trees on either side of a long tank of limpid water, in which gracefully floated dozens of swans and ducks. We were met at the gate by our host, a charming old fellow, and his son, Mahomed Ali Khan, a most intelligent young man. Surrounded by a crowd of servants we were shown round the beautiful garden, with its rare plants from all parts of the world, its well-cared-for flowers, and its fruit trees of every imaginable kind. There was a handsome house built in semi-European style and with European furniture in it. On a table in the dining-room were spread a great many trays of sweets. After the usual compliments dinner was brought in by a long row of attendants, who carried tray after tray full of delicacies, part of which they deposited on the table, the rest on the floor.

Our host, with much modesty, asked us to sit at the table, and he and his Persian friends sat themselves on the floor. We—the Consul, the two other Englishmen, residents of Kerman, and myself, however—declined to take advantage of his offer and declared that we should all sit on the floor in the best Persian style, an attention which was greatly appreciated by our host and by his friends.

It was with some dismay that I saw more trays of food being conveyed into the room, until the whole floor was absolutely covered with trays, large and small, and dishes, cups and saucers, all brim-full of something or other to eat.



A VIEW OF THE KERMAN PLAIN FROM THE "YA ALI" INSCRIPTION.



WIVES RETURNING FROM THE PILGRIMAGE FOR STERILE WOMEN.

Persian food of the better kind and in moderation is not at all bad nor unattractive. It is quite clean, —cleaner, if it comes to that, than the general run of the best European cooking. The meat is ever fresh and good, the chickens never too high—in fact, only killed and bled a few minutes before they are cooked; the eggs always newly laid in fact, and not merely in theory, and the vegetables ever so clean and tasty. As for the fruit of Central and Southern Persia, it is eminently excellent and plentiful.

The Persians themselves eat with their fingers, which they duly wash before beginning their meals, but we were given silver forks and spoons and best English knives. Really to enjoy a Persian meal, however, one's fingers are quite unapproachable by any more civilised device.

The most sensible part of a Persian meal is its comparative lack of method and order, anybody picking wherever he likes from the many dishes displayed in the centre of the room and all round him; but any one endowed with digestive organs of moderate capacity feels some apprehension at the mountains of rice and food which are placed before one, and is expected to devour. A European who wants to be on his best behaviour finds the last stages of a Persian dinner a positive trial, and is reminded very forcibly of the terrible fable of the frog that tried to emulate the cow. To show the reader to what test of expansion one's capacity is put, no better evidence can be given than a faithful enumeration of the viands spread before us at the dinner here described, all of which we were made to taste.

Qalam palājō	=Cabbage pilao.
Chilā-ō	=White rice with a soupçon of butter.
Khurish-i-murgh-i-bādinjān	=Stew of chicken with tomatoes.
Kabāb-i-chūja	=Broiled chicken.
Shāmī	=Meat sausages.
Dulmayi qalam	=Meat wrapped in cabbage leaves with onions and beans.
Āb-gūsh	=Soup with a lump of meat.
Halwa	=A dish of honey, pistache, and camel's milk.
Kū-kū	=Omelette of eggs and vegetables.
Mushta	=Rissoles.
Mast	=Curds.
Kharbuza	=Melon.
Panīr	=Cheese.
Turb	=Radishes.
Pista	=Pistachio nuts.
Ānār	=Pomegranates.
Zabān-i-gaw	=Green bombes.
Turshī	=Pickles of all sorts.
Rishta	=White and green vermicelli cakes.
Murabba bihi	=Preserved gum.

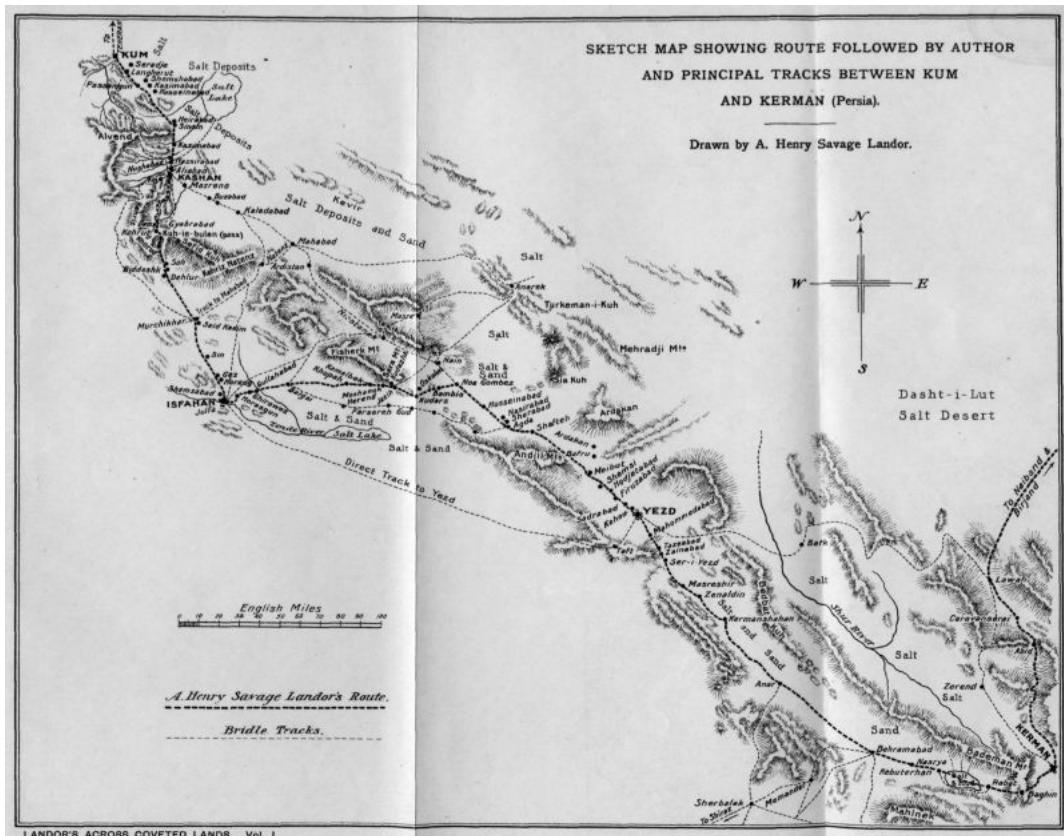
To these must be added the numerous sweets of which one has to partake freely before dinner. Through dinner only water is drunk, or nothing at all, but before and after, tea—three-quarters sugar and one quarter tea, with no milk,—is served, and also delicious coffee.

The capacity of Persians is enormous, and on trying to emulate it we all suffered considerably. So pressing were our hosts to make us eat some of this and some of that, and to taste some of the other, that by the time we had finished we were all in a semi-conscious state. An attendant passed round a brass bowl and poured upon our fingers, from a graceful amphora, tepid water with rose-leaf scent. Then our host very considerately had us led to the upper floor of the building to a deliciously cool room, wherein were soft silk broad divans with velvet pillows. Five minutes later, one in each corner of the room, we were all fast asleep. It is the custom in Persia to have a siesta after one's meals—one needs it badly when one is asked out to dinner. So for a couple of hours we were left to ourselves, while our hosts retired to their rooms. Then more tea was brought, more coffee, more sweets.

We paid an interesting visit to the village of Fatabad, the older portion of which, formerly called Rustamabad, had from a distance the appearance of a strongly fortified place. It had a high broad wall with four circular towers at the corners, and quite an imposing gateway. The interior of the village was curious, the habitations being adjacent to the village wall all round, and each room having a perforated dome over it. There was spacious stabling on one side for horses, and several irregular courts in the centre of the village. A long wall stretched from this village to the Fatabad gardens and palatial dwelling of Hussein-Ali-Khan, and on one side of this wall were nicely kept wheat fields, while on the other lay a capital fruit garden.

In the new village of Fatabad, directly outside the wall of Rustamabad, there were but few houses, with an interesting underground hammam, with water coming from natural mineral springs brought here from the village of Ikhtiyarabad, some little distance off. Behind this village, to the west, a barrier of high rugged hills closed the horizon before us, and made the view a most delightfully picturesque one.

In the evening, in the same grand carriage, we were again conveyed back to Kerman, as I intended to start at midnight on my journey across the Great Salt Desert.



SKETCH MAP SHOWING ROUTE FOLLOWED BY AUTHOR AND PRINCIPAL TRACKS BETWEEN KUM AND KERMAN (Persia).
Drawn by A. Henry Savage Landor.

END OF VOL. I

RICHARD CLAY AND SONS, LIMITED, LONDON AND BUNGAY.

ACROSS COVETED LANDS

OR

A JOURNEY FROM FLUSHING (HOLLAND) TO CALCUTTA, OVERLAND

BY

A. HENRY SAVAGE LANDOR

WITH 175 ILLUSTRATIONS, DIAGRAMS, PLANS AND MAPS

BY AUTHOR

IN TWO VOLUMES

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ACROSS COVETED LANDS

CHAPTER I

Difficulties of crossing the Great Salt Desert—The trials of arranging a caravan—The ways of camel-men—A quaint man of the Desert—A legal agreement—Preparations for the departure—"Kerman" and "Zeris," my two Persian kittens and travelling

companions—Persian cats—The start—The charms of camel riding—Marching among mountains.

My intention was to cross the Salt Desert in an almost easterly direction by the route from Khabis to Neh, which seemed the most direct route from Kerman to the Afghan frontier, but on mentioning my project to the Consul and his Persian assistant, Nasr-el Khan, they dissuaded me from attempting it, declaring it impossible to get across in the autumn. Why it was impossible I could not quite ascertain, each man from whom I inquired giving a different reason, but the fact remained that it was impossible. The Governor of Kerman, all the highest officials in the town, told me that it could not be done till three or four months later, when the Afghan camels would come over, laden with butter, by that route. Even faithful Sadek, whom I had despatched to the bazaar to get camels at all costs, returned with a long face after a whole day's absence, and for the first time since he was in my employ had to change his invariable answer of "Sahib, have got," to a bitterly disappointing "Sahib, no can get."

A delay was predicted on all hands of at least a month or two in Kerman before I could possibly obtain camels to cross the desert in any direction towards the east. The tantalising trials of arranging a caravan were not small.

I offered to purchase camels, but no camel driver could be induced to accompany me. Offers of treble pay and bakshish had no effect, and I found myself in a serious dilemma when a camel man appeared on the scene. His high terms were then and there accepted, everything that he asked for was conceded, when suddenly, probably believing that all this was too good to come true, he backed out of the bargain and positively refused to go. Had I chosen to go by the southern route, skirting the desert *via* Bam, the difficulty would not have been so great, but that route is very easy, and had been followed by several Europeans at different times, and I declined to go that way.

I was beginning to despair when Sadek, who had spent another day hunting in the various caravanserais, entered my room, and with a broad grin on his generally stolid countenance, proclaimed that he had found some good camels. To corroborate his words a clumsy and heavy-footed camel man, with a face which by association had become like that of the beasts he led, was shoved forward into the room.

He was a striking figure, with an ugly but singularly honest countenance, his eyes staring and abnormally opened, almost strained—the eyes of a man who evidently lived during the night and slept during the day. His mouth stretched, with no exaggeration, from ear to ear, and displayed a double row of powerful white teeth. What was lacking in quantity of nose was made up by a superabundance of malformed, shapeless ears, which projected at the sides of his head like two wings. When his legs were closed—*pour façon de parler*—they were still some six inches apart, and a similar space was noticeable between each of his arms and his body. Unmistakably this fellow was the very picture of clumsiness.

He seemed so much distracted by the various articles of furniture in the Consul's room that one could get no coherent answer from him, and his apprehension gave way to positive terror when he was addressed in flowing language by the various high officials who were then calling on the Consul. Their ways of persuasion by threats and promises alarmed the camel man to such an extent that his eyes roamed about all over the place, palpably to find a way to effect an escape. He was, however, so clumsy at it, that the consul's servants and soldiers checked him in time, and Sadek broke in with one of his usual flows of words at the top of his voice, which, however, could hardly be heard amid the vigorous eloquence of the Persians present, who all spoke at the same time, and at an equally high pitch.

With a sinking heart I closely watched the camel man, in whom rested my faint and last hope of crossing the Salt Desert. He looked so bewildered—and no wonder—almost terror-stricken, that when he was asked about his camels, the desert, the amount of pay required, he sulkily mumbled that he had no camels, knew nothing whatever about the desert, and did not wish to receive any pay.

"Why, then, did you come here?"

"I did not come here!"

"But you are here."

"I want to go away."

"Yes, sahib," cried the chorus of Persians, "he has the camels, he knows the desert; only he is frightened, as he has never spoken to a sahib before."

Here a young Hindoo merchant, Mul Chan Dilaram, entered the room, and with obsequious salaams to the company, assured me that he had brought this camel man to me, and that when he had got over his first fears I should find him an excellent man. While we were all listening to the Hindoo's assurances the camel man made a bolt for the door, and escaped as fast as he could lay his legs to the ground towards the city.

He was chased by the soldiers, and after some time was dragged back.

"Why did you run away?" he was asked.

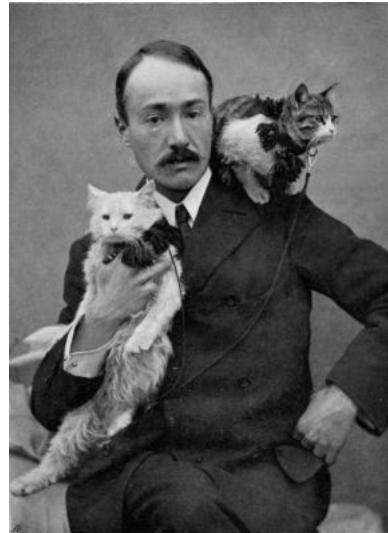
"Sahib," he replied, almost crying, "I am only a man of the desert; my only friends are my camels; please have pity on me!"

"Then you have camels, and you do know the desert; you have said so in your own words."

The camel man had to agree, and on being assured that he would be very well paid and treated, and have a new pair of shoes given him, and as much tea brewed for him on the road, with as much sugar in it as his capacity would endure, he at last said he would come. The Hindoo, with great cunning, at once seized the hand of the camel man in his own and made him swear that death should descend upon himself, his camels and his family if he should break his word, or give me any trouble. The camel man swore. An agreement was hastily drawn up before he had time to change his mind, and a handsome advance in solid silver was pressed into his hands to make the agreement good and to allay his feelings. When requested to sign the document the camel man, who had sounded each

coin on the doorstep, and to his evident surprise found them all good, gaily dipped his thumb into the inkstand and affixed his natural mark, a fine smudge, upon the valuable paper, and licked up the surplus ink with his tongue. The man undertook to provide the necessary camels and saddles, and to take me across the Salt Desert in a north-easterly direction, the only way by which, he said, it was possible to cross the *Lut*, the year having been rainless, and nearly all the wells being dry. It would take from twenty-two to twenty-six days to get across, and most of the journey would be waterless or with brackish water. Skins had to be provided to carry our own supply of water.

A whole day was spent in preparing for the journey, and when November 4th came, shortly before midnight my provisions were packed upon my camels, with an extra load of fowls and one of fruit, while on the hump of the last camel of my caravan were perched, in a wooden box made comfortable with straw and cotton-wool, two pretty Persian kittens, aged respectively three weeks and four weeks, which I had purchased in Kerman, and which, as we shall see, lived through a great many adventures and sufferings, and actually reached London safe and sound, proving themselves to be the most wonderful and agreeable little travelling companions imaginable. One was christened "Kerman," the other "Zeris."



KERMAN AND ZERIS, the two Kittens who accompanied Author on his wanderings.

The Persian cat, as everybody knows, possesses a long, soft, silky coat, with a beautiful tail and ruff, similar to the cats known in Europe as Angora, which possess probably longer hair on the body. The Persian cats, too, have a longer pencil of hair on the ears than domestic cats, and have somewhat the appearance and the motions of wild cats, but if properly treated are gentleness itself, and possess the most marvellous intelligence. Unlike cats of most other nationalities, they seem to enjoy moving from place to place, and adapt themselves to fresh localities with the greatest ease. If fed entirely on plenty of raw meat and water they are extremely gentle and affectionate and never wish to leave you; the reason that many Persian cats—who still possess some of the qualities of wild animals—grow savage and leave their homes, being principally because of the lack of raw meat which causes them to go ahunting to procure it for themselves. The cat, it should be remembered, is a carnivorous animal, and is not particularly happy when fed on a vegetable diet, no more than we beef-eating people are when invited to a vegetarian dinner.

Isfahan is the city from which long-haired Persian cats, the *burak*, are brought down to the Gulf, and from there to India, but the Kerman cats are said by the Persians themselves to be the best. The white ones are the most appreciated by the Persians; then the blue (grey) ones with differently coloured eyes, and the tabby ones. Mine were, one perfectly white, the other tabby.

At midnight I said good-bye to Major Phillott, whose kind hospitality I had enjoyed for four days, and began my slow and dreary march on camel-back. Swung too and fro till one feels that one's spine is breaking in two, we wound our way down from the Consulate at Zeris, skirted the town, now asleep and in a dead silence, and then turned north-east among the barren Kupayeh Mountains.

We had a fine moonlight, and had I been on a horse instead of a camel I should probably have enjoyed looking at the scenery, but what with the abnormal Persian dinner to which I had been treated in the afternoon (see Vol. I.)—what with the unpleasant swing of the camel and the monotonous dingle of the camels' bells—I became so very sleepy that I could not keep my eyes open.

There is very little style to be observed about riding a camel, and one's only aim must be to be comfortable, which is easier said than done, for camels have so many ways of their own, and these ways are so varied, that it is really difficult to strike a happy medium.

Sadek had made a kind of spacious platform on my saddle by piling on it carpets, blankets, and a mattress, and on the high butt of the saddle in front he had fastened a pillow folded in two.

As we wended our way along the foot of one hill and then another, while nothing particularly striking appeared in the scenery, I thought I would utilise what comfort I had within reach, and resting my head on the pillow, through which one still felt the hard wooden frame of the saddle, and with one leg and arm dangling loose on each side of the saddle, I slept soundly all through the night. Every now and then the camel stumbled or gave a sudden jerk, which nearly made one tumble off the high perch, but otherwise this was really a delightful way of passing the long dreary hours of the night.

We marched some nine hours, and having gone over a low pass across the range, halted near a tiny spring of fairly good water. Here we were at the entrance of an extensive valley with a small village in the centre. Our way, however, lay to the south-east of the valley along the mountains. We were at an elevation of 6,300 feet, or 800 feet above Kerman.

The heat of the day was so great that we halted, giving the camels a chance of grazing on what tamarisks they could find during day-light, for indeed camels are troublesome animals. They must not eat after sundown or it makes them ill. They are let loose on arrival at a camp, and they drift away in search of lichens or other shrubs. At sunset they are driven back to camp, where they kneel down and ruminate to their hearts' content until it is time for the caravan to start. The heavy wooden saddles with heavy padding under them are not removed from the camel's hump while the journey lasts, and each camel has, among other neck-ornaments of tassels and shells, one or more brass bells, which are useful in finding the camels again when strayed too far in grazing.

We left at midnight and crossed the wide valley with the village of Sar-es-iap (No. 1) four miles from our last camp. Again we came among mountains and entered a narrow gorge. The night was bitterly cold. We caught up a large caravan, and the din of the camels' bells and the hoarse groans of the camels, who were quite out of breath going up the incline, made the night a lively one, the sounds being magnified and echoed from mountain to mountain.

Every now and then a halt had to be called to give the camels a rest, and the camel men spread their felt overcoats upon the ground and lay down for five or ten minutes to have a sleep. Then the long string of camels would proceed again up the hill, the camels urged by the strange cries and sing-songs of the men.

This part of the journey being mountainous, one came across three little streams of water, and at each the camel man urged me to drink as much as I could, because, he said, the time will come when we shall see no water at all for days at a time.

We were gradually rising, the camels panting dreadfully, and had got up to 7,100 feet when we camped near the village of Kalaoteh—a few small domed hovels, a field or two, and a cluster of trees along a brook. We were still among the Kupayeh Mountains with the Kurus peak towering directly above us.

CHAPTER II

Fifty miles from Kerman—Camels not made for climbing hills—The Godar Khorassunih Pass—Volcanic formation—Sar-es-iap—A variegated mountain—A castle—Rock dwellings—Personal safety—Quaint natives—Women and their ways—Footgear.

ON November 6th we were some fifty miles from Kerman. Again when midnight came and I was slumbering hard with the two kittens, who had made themselves cosy on my blankets, the hoarse grunts of the camels being brought up to take the loads woke me up with a start, and the weird figure of the camel-man stooped over me to say it was time to depart.

"Hrrrr, hrrrr!" spoke the camel-man to each camel, by which the animals understood they must kneel down. The loads were quickly fastened on the saddles, the kittens lazily stretched themselves and yawned as they were removed from their warm nooks, and Sadek in a moment packed up all my bedding on my saddle.

We continued to ascend, much to the evident discomfort of the camels, who were quite unhappy when going up or down hill. It was really ridiculous to see these huge, clumsy brutes quite done up, even on the gentlest incline. The track went up and up in zigzag and curves, the cries of the camel-drivers were constantly urging on the perplexed animals, and the dingle of the smaller bells somewhat enlivened the slow, monotonous ding-dong of the huge cylindrical bell—some two and a half feet high and one foot in diameter—tied to the load of the last camel, and mournfully resounding in the valley down below.

And we swung and swung on the camels' humps, in the beautiful starlight night—the moon had not yet risen—on several occasions going across narrow passages with a drop under us of considerable depth, where one earnestly hoped the quivering legs of the timid camels would not give way or perchance stumble. The higher we got the more the camels panted and roared, and the cries of the drivers were doubled.

One farsakh and a half from our last camp, we reached at 2 A.M. the top of the Godar Khorassunih Pass (8,400 ft.), and we had to halt for a while to let the camels rest. The cold was bitter. Camels and men were trembling all over. Then came the descent.

Camel riding is comfortable at no time. It is passable on the flat; just bearable going up hill, but dreadful going down a fairly steep incline. The wretched beasts assumed a kind of hopping, jerky motion on their front legs, with a good deal of spring in their knees, which bumped the rider to such an extent that it seemed almost as if all the bones in one's body began to get disjointed and rattle. When the camel happened to stumble among the rocks and loose stones the sudden jerk was so painful that it took some seconds to recover from the ache it caused in one's spine.

The moon rose shortly after we had gone over the pass, as we were wending our way from one narrow gorge into another, between high rocks and cliffs and mountains of most fantastic forms. We passed the little village of Huruh, and at dawn the picturesqueness of the scenery increased tenfold when the cold bluish tints of the moon gradually vanished in the landscape, and first the mountains became capped and then lighted all over with warm, brilliant, reddish tints, their edge appearing sharply cut against the clear, glowing, golden sky behind them.

We were now proceeding along a dry, wide river bed, which had on one side a tiny stream, a few inches broad, of crystal-like water dripping along. Evident signs could be noticed that during the torrential storms of the rainy season this bed must occasionally carry large volumes of water. A foot track can be perceived on either side some twelve feet above the bed, which is followed by caravans when the river is in flood.

We now entered a volcanic region with high perpendicular rocks to our right, that seemed as if they had undergone the action of long periods of fire or excessive heat; then we emerged into a large basin in which the vegetation struck one as being quite luxuriant by contrast with the barren country we had come through. There were a few old and healthy trees on the edge of the thread of water, and

high tamarisks in profusion. On our left, where the gorge narrowed again between the mountains, was a large flow of solid green lava. In this basin was a quaint little hamlet—Sar-es-iap (No. 2)—actually boasting of a flour-mill, and curious rock dwellings which the natives inhabit.

We continued, and entered a broader valley, also of volcanic formation, with reddish sediments burying a sub-formation of yellowish brown rock which appeared in the section of the mountains some 300 feet above the plain. To the W.N.W. stood a lofty variegated mountain, the higher part of which was of dark brown in a horizontal stratum, while the lower was a slanting layer of deep red.

In the valley there was some cultivation of wheat, and I noticed some plum, apple, fig and pomegranate trees. One particularly ancient tree of enormous proportions stood near the village, and under its refreshing shade I spent the day. The village itself—a quaint castle-like structure with ruined tower—was curiously built in the interior. On the first storey of the large tower were to be found several humble huts, and other similar ones stood behind to the north. These huts were domed and so low as hardly to allow a person to stand erect inside. Some had an opening in the dome, most had only a single aperture, the door. The majority of the inhabitants seemed quite derelict and lived in the most abject poverty.

A few yards north-east of the castle were some rock habitations. There were three large chambers dug in the rock side by side, two of one single room and one of two rooms *en suite*. The largest room measured twenty feet by twelve, and was some six feet high. In the interior were receptacles apparently for storing grain. The doorway was quite low, and the heat inside suffocating. Curiously enough, one or two of these chambers were not quite straight, but formed an elbow into the mountain side.

At the sides of the row of cliff dwellings were two smaller doors giving access to storehouses also dug in the rock. I was told that the natives migrated to this village during the winter months from October till one month after the Persian New Year, while they spend the remainder of the year higher up on the mountains owing to the intense heat. Firewood, which is scarce, is stored piled up on the top of roofs, whence a little at a time is taken down for fuel, and prominent in front of the village was a coarse and well-fortified pen for sheep. Wolves were said to be plentiful in the neighbourhood, and as I was sitting down writing my notes a shepherd boy ran into the tower to say that a wolf had killed one of his sheep.

Both from men and beasts there seemed to be little safety near the village, according to the natives, who invariably took their old-fashioned matchlocks with them when they went to work in their fields, even a few yards away from the castle.

One peculiarity of this village, which stood at an altitude of 6,180 feet, was that nobody seemed to know its name. The people themselves said that it had no name, but whether they were afraid of telling me, in their suspicions that some future evil might come upon them or for other reasons, I cannot say.

The natives were certainly rather original in their appearance, their ways and speech, and as I comfortably sat under the big tree and watched them coming in and out of the castle-village, they interested me much. Donkeys in pairs were taken in and out of the gate to convey manure to the fields, and old men and young came in and out carrying their long-poled spades and matchlocks. Even little boys were armed.

The men reminded one very forcibly, both in features and attire, of the figures in ancient Egyptian sculptures, of which they were the very image. They wore felt skull caps, the side locks of jet black hair cut straight across. They had clean-shaven necks and lumpy black beards. Their tall bodies were slender, with short waists, and their wiry feet showed beneath ample trousers—so ample as almost to approach a divided skirt. The children were pretty, and although miserably clothed looked the very picture of health and suppleness.

The women, of whom a number sat the whole day perched on the domed roofs of their huts to watch the doings of the *ferenghi*, showed their faces fully, and although professing to be Mussulman made no attempt whatever at concealment. They wore picturesque light blue and red kerchiefs on the head and shoulders, falling into a point behind, and held fast in position round the skull by a small black and blue turban. A pin held the two sides of the kerchief together under the chin. The women were garbed in short, pleated blue skirts reaching just below the knee, and a short loose coat of the same cotton material with side slits and ample sleeves. They had bare legs, well proportioned and straight, with handsome ankles and long, well-formed feet and toes. When working they went about bare-footed, but when their daily occupations were finished put on small slippers.

They were particularly to be admired when they walked, which they did to perfection, looking most attractively picturesque when carrying jugs of water on the head. The head had to be then kept very erect, and gave a becoming curve to the well-modelled neck and a most graceful swing to the waist. A long black cloak, not unlike a *chudder*, was worn over the head after sunset when the air was turning cold.

The women did all the hard work and seemed to put their whole soul into it. Some gaily spun wool on their wheels, and others worked at small, neat, but primitive weaving looms which were erected on the top storey of the castle.

Affectionate mothers carefully searched the hair of the heads of their children—to remove therefrom all superfluous animal life,—but to my dismay I discovered that their good-nature went so far as not to destroy the captured brutes, which were merely picked up most gently, so as not to injure them, and flung down from the castle-village wall, on the top of which this operation took place. As there were other people sitting quite unconcerned down below, no doubt this provided a good deal of perpetual occupation to the women of the castle, and the parasites were provided with a constant change of abode.

Probably what astonished me most was to see a young damsel climb up a tall tree in the best monkey fashion, with successively superposed arms and legs stiff and straight, not round the tree, mind you, and using her toes for the purpose with almost equal ease as her fingers.

The foot-gear of the men was interesting. They wore wooden-soled clogs, held fast to the foot by a string between the big toe and the next, and another band half way across the foot. Some of the men, however, wore common shoes with wooden soles.

CHAPTER III

An abandoned caravanserai—Fantastic hill tops—No water—A most impressive mountain—Sediments of salt—A dry river bed—Curious imprints in the rock—A row—Intense heat—Accident to our supply of eggs—The end of a meeting—Misleading maps—Haoz Panch—The camel-man's bread—Lawah.

AGAIN we left camp shortly before midnight, and ascended continually between mountains until we reached a pass 7,250 ft. above the sea, after which we came upon the abandoned caravanserai of Abid (pronounced Obit). On descending, the way was between high vertical rocks, and then we found ourselves among hills of most peculiar formation. The sun was about to rise, and the fantastic hill-tops, in some places not unlike sharp teeth of a gigantic saw, in others recalled Stonehenge and the pillar-like remains of temples of Druids. In this case they were, of course, entirely of natural formation. Although there was no water in the valley into which we had descended, we camped here owing to the camels being very tired, and I took the opportunity of climbing to a neighbouring hill (6,300 ft.) in order to obtain a panoramic view of the surrounding country.

To the South-East, whence we had come, were low and comparatively well-rounded mountains with two narrow valleys separated by a flat-topped, tortuous hill range. To the north-east of my camp was a high and most impressive mountain, the upper portion of which appeared at first almost of a basaltic formation, with vertical quadrangular columns, while the lower portion of the mountain, evidently accumulated at a later period, and slanting at an angle of 45°, displayed distinct strata of light brown, a deep band of grey, then dark brown, light brown, a thin layer of grey, and then a gradation of beautiful warm burnt sienna colour, getting richer and richer in tone towards the base. Here at the bottom, all round the mountain, and in appearance not unlike the waves of a choppy sea in shallow water, rose hundreds of broken-up, pointed hillocks, the point of each hillock being invariably turned in a direction away from the mountain, and these were formed not of sand, but by a much broken-up stratum of black, burnt slate, at an angle of 20° in relation to an imaginary horizontal plane.



AUTHOR'S CARAVAN AND OTHERS HALTING IN THE DESERT.

It was most curious to find these enormous layers of black slate here, for they were quite different in character from the whole country around. About two miles further off, north-east, we had, for instance, a range of mountains of quite a different type, not at all broken up nor with sharp cutting edges, but quite nicely rounded off. Between this range and the high peculiar mountain which I have just described—in the flat stretch—were to be seen some curious hillocks, apparently formed by water.

N.E. was the way towards Birjand, first across a long flat plain bounded before us by low greyish hills, beyond which a high mountain-range—the Leker Kuh—towered sublime. Two mountain masses of fair height stood in front of this range, one N.N.E. on the left of the track, the other N.N.W., with a white sediment of salt at its base; while beyond could be distinguished a long flat-topped mountain with a peculiar white horizontal band half way up it, like a huge chalk mark, all along its entire length of several miles. This mountain appeared to be some thirty miles off. The mountain mass to the N.W. showed no picturesque characteristics, but a more broken-up mountain, somewhat similar to the one to our N.E., stood between my camp and the range beyond.

As I have already stated, we had come along a dry river bed, and from my high point of vantage I could see its entire course to the north-west. It ran in a tortuous manner until it absolutely lost itself in the flat desert. The long snake-like hill-range separating the parallel valleys from south-east to north-west appeared to owe its formation to the action of water, the surface pebbles, even at the summit of it, being well rounded and worn quite smooth, many with grooves in them.

Near my camp I came across some very curious imprints in the hard rock, like lava. There were some rocks hollowed out, in a fantastic way, as if the hollows had been formed by some softer matter having been enclosed in the rock and having gradually disappeared, and also a perfect cast of a large tibia bone. On other rocks were footprints of large animals, evidently made when the lava was soft.

On returning to camp I found a general row going on between Sadek and the camel men—my own and those of the other caravan who had asked permission to travel with me. There was no water at this camp, and only salt water could be procured in small quantities some distance away. The intense heat had played havoc with some of my fresh provisions, and we unfortunately had an accident to the load of eggs which were all destroyed. A great many of the chickens, too, had gone bad, and we were running rather short of fresh food. The caravan men said that it was impossible to go on, because, this being such a dry year, even the few brackish wells across the desert would be dry, and they refused to come on.

The greater part of the evening was spent in arguing—everybody except myself shouting himself hoarse. At midnight, the usual hour of our departure, the camel men refused to pack the loads and continue across the desert. At 1 A.M. they were preparing to leave me to return to Kerman. At 1.30, my patience being on the verge of being exhausted, they most of them received a good pounding

with the butt of my rifle. At 1.45, they having come back to their senses, I duly entertained each of them to a cup of tea, brewed with what salt water we had got, on a fire of camel dung, and at 2 A.M. we proceeded on our course as quietly as if nothing had happened.

We still followed the dry river bed among hills getting lower and lower for about three miles on either side of us, and at last we entered a vast plain. We went N.N.W. for some twelve miles, when by the side of some low hillocks of sand and pebbles we came upon a caravanserai, and an older and smaller structure, a large covered tank of rain water (almost empty) which is conveyed here from the hills twelve miles off by means of a small canal.

To the S.S.E. we could still see the flat-topped mountain under which we had camped the previous day, and all around us were distant mountains. The flat plain stretching for miles on every side had deep grooves cut into it by water flowing down from the mountain-side during the torrential rains and eventually losing themselves in the sand.

On the English and some of the German maps these dry grooves are marked as large and important rivers, but this is a mistake. There is not a drop of water in any of them at any time of the year except during heavy storms, when the drainage of the mountains is immediately carried down by these channels and lost in the desert. It is no more right to mark these channels as rivers than it would be to see Piccadilly marked on a map of London as a foaming torrent because during a heavy shower the surplus water not absorbed by the wood pavement had run down it half an inch deep until the rain stopped.

To the N.E. we saw much more clearly than the day before the extensive salt deposits at the base of the mountains, and to the N.N.E. a grey mountain with a fluted top. A high mountain mass stretched from the South to the North-West and then there was a wide opening into another flat sandy plain. Far, far beyond this a distant range of high mountains could hardly be distinguished, for a sand-storm was raging in that direction and veiled the view with a curtain of dirty yellowish grey.

This caravanserai, called Haoz Panch (or "Fifth water") altitude 5,050 feet—was built by some charitable person to protect caravans during sand-storms, and also to supply them with water, which was quite drinkable, if one were not too particular, and if one did not look at it. The caravanserai, very solidly built, was left to take care of itself, there being no one in charge of it. The *kilns* erected to bake the bricks with which the caravanserai had been built, still stood near it.

It is rather curious to notice what effect a drink of fair water has on the temper of one's men. My camel man, Ali Murat, for that was his name, was in high spirits and came to fetch me to show me how he made his bread, for he was keen to know whether camel men(!) in my country made it the same way! I reserved my answer until I had seen his process.

The hands having been carefully washed first, flour and water, with great lumps of salt, were duly mixed together in a bowl until reduced into fairly solid paste. A clean cloth was then spread upon the ground and the paste punched hard upon it with the knuckles, care having been taken to sprinkle some dry flour first so that the paste should not stick to the cloth. When this had gone on for a considerable time the paste was balanced upon the knuckles and brought gaily bounding to where the hot cinders remained from a fire of camel dung which had previously been lighted. The flattened paste was carefully laid upon the hot ashes, with which it was then covered, and left to bake for an hour or so.

When ready, Ali Murat brought me a piece of the bread to try—which I reluctantly did so as not to offend his feelings.

"Do camel men in your country, Sahib, make as good bread as this when they cross the *lut* (desert)?" inquired Ali Murat, with an expectant grin from ear to ear.

"We have no camel men in my country, and no camels, and no *lut*! How could we then get as good bread as yours?" (Really, when one tried to forget the process of making it, which did not quite appeal to one, the bread was not bad.)

"You have no camels, sahib,—no *lut*—in your country?" exclaimed Ali, with his eyes fast expanding with surprise; "Why, then, did you come here?"

"We have so much scenery in my country that I thought I would come here for a change."



AUTHOR'S CARAVAN IN THE SALT DESERT.



ALI MURAT MAKING BREAD.

We left the caravanserai at 11.30 p.m. on November 9th and travelled across the plain all through the night. About 4 miles from Haoz Panch we found an ancient mud caravanserai abandoned and partly ruined. We had the hills quite close on our right and we came across a good many dry channels cut by water. We travelled on the flat all the time, but we passed on either side a great many low mounds of sand and gravel. There was absolutely nothing worth noticing in the night's journey until we came to the small villages of Heirabad and Shoshabad, eighteen miles from our last camp. Two miles further we found ourselves at Lawah (Rawar)—altitude 4,430 feet—a very large oasis with a small town of some three thousand mud huts and ten thousand inhabitants, according to native accounts.

CHAPTER IV

Lawah or Rawar—A way to Yezd—The bazaar—Trade—Ruined forts—Opium smoking and its effects—Beggar's ingenious device—In a local gentleman's home—The Tokrajie—Buying fresh provisions—Water skins—An unhealthy climate—A fight—When fever is contracted—Wolves in camp—Fever stricken—A third cat purchased.

LAWAH or Rawar is, in a way, quite an important centre. It is the last place one passes before entering the Salt Desert proper, on the border of which it is situated, and is, therefore, the last spot where provisions and good water can be obtained. It has a certain amount of local trade and is connected with Yezd by a very tortuous track *via* Bafk-Kuh-Benan. It has no possible resting place, and we therefore camped just outside the town. The natives were not particularly friendly and seemed inclined to give trouble. There was considerable excitement when we crossed the town in the morning on our arrival, and even more when I went to inspect the city alone in the afternoon.

There was nothing to see, the bazaar in the place being one of the most miserable looking in Persia. It was not domed over like those of other Persian cities, but the streets were merely covered with rafters supporting brush wood and rotten mats. There were no shops proper, but various merchants, and brass-smiths, fruit-sellers, or sellers of articles for caravans, had a certain amount of cheap goods within their habitation doors.

More quaintly interesting were the commercial caravanserais, or small squares with receptacles all round for travelling merchants to display their goods upon. Lawah's trade is principally a transit trade, the caravans which occasionally come through the desert taking an opportunity of selling off some of their goods here, as also, of course, do those that come from Yezd or Kerman.

There is some cultivation of wheat and cotton in the immediate neighbourhood, and of fruit, which is quite excellent. The water is not very plentiful, as can be seen by the hundreds of borings for water and disused *kanats* to the north of the city, where most fields are to be found, while the majority of fruit gardens and trees are to the east.

Here, as everywhere else in Persia, a great portion of the town is uninhabited and in ruins, and to the south-west, outside the inhabited part, can be seen an interesting ruined quadrangular castle with a double wall and moat with an outer watch tower besides the corner turrets. Inside this castle was formerly a village. Another smaller fort, also in ruins, is situated to the S.S.W.

There are a great many palm trees within the place, and they produce good dates. The climate is most unhealthy, fever of the desert being rampant. Great use is made of opium, which is smoked to excess by the natives and has very disastrous effects in such an unhealthy climate. Personally, I have ever believed, and believe still, that opium used in moderation has no worse effects upon the light-headed human beings who choose to make themselves slaves to it than whisky or tobacco, but under these particular circumstances and in this particular climate it had undoubtedly most evil effects in just the same way that whisky, which is certainly the best drink for damp Scotland, is most injurious to those who make use of it in similar doses in India.

Although I have visited opium dens, merely for the purpose of observing, in almost every Asiatic country where opium smoking is practised, I have never seen cases quite so depressing as here. A great proportion of the population suffered from fever, to allay the sufferings of which opium was used.

There was, of course, the usual contingent of sick people visiting my camp to obtain medicine for their various troubles—one fever-stricken man, with cadaverous face and skeleton-like limbs, collapsing altogether when reaching me and remaining senseless for a considerable time. As I never carry medicine of any kind in my travels I was unable to satisfy them, but I gave them some little present each, which did them just as much good.

Beggars, too, visited the camp in appalling numbers, and their ways were quite interesting; but none was so ingenious as that of an old woman, who waited till there was a goodish crowd of visitors in

my camp, and then rushed at me and made a violent scene, saying that I must pay her 50 tomans—about £10.

"But I have never seen you before! What have you done to earn such a sum?"

"Oh, Sahib, you have ruined me!" and she yelled as only an angry old woman can! She plumped herself on my best carpet and proceeded to explain. She said that she had buried the above stated sum in solid silver within a pile of straw, which she had sold the day before to a man to feed his camels upon. She was therefore—according to a reasoning of her own, since I had not yet arrived here the day before, nor could she identify the man with any of my party—certain that my camels had devoured the sum, and I, therefore, must pay the sum back! She was, nevertheless, sure that I was not to blame in the matter, and was willing to waive the claim on the immediate payment of two shais—about a half-penny!

Although it is well to be as kind as one can to the natives, it is never right to allow them to go unpunished for playing tricks. Of all the people—and they were many—who applied for charity that day, she was the only one who received nothing. This punishment, I was glad to see, was approved of by the many natives who had collected round.

A gentlemanly-looking fellow came forward and asked me to visit his house, where he was manufacturing a huge carpet—very handsome in design, but somewhat coarse in texture—ordered for Turkestan. Three women in his house had uncovered faces, and were very good-looking. They brought us tea in the garden, and sweets and water melon, but did not, of course, join in the conversation, and modestly kept apart in a corner. They wore white *chudders* over the head and long petticoats—quite a becoming attire—while the men, too, were most artistic in appearance, with smart zouave yellow jackets trimmed with fur, with short sleeves not reaching quite to the elbow, leaving the arm quite free in its movements, and displaying the loose sleeve of the shirt underneath.

A couple of newly-born babies were swung in hammocks in the garden, and were remarkably quiet when asleep!

On going for a walk on the outskirts of the city one found a great many fairly high mud hillocks to the east, averaging 400 feet. East-south-east there stood hundreds more of these hillocks, with taller brown hills (the Leker Kuh) behind them, and to the west a high peak, rising to an estimated 11,000 feet, in the Kuh-Benan mountains. The Tokrajie Mountains, south-west of Lawah, did not seem to rise to more than 9,000 or 10,000 feet, and extended in a south-south-east direction. South-east we could still see the Kuh Legav Mountain, at the foot of which we had camped on November 8th. To the north was a long mountain, with a white stratum like a horizontal stripe half-way up it, and the summit was in regular teeth like those of a saw. Another similar but more pointed mountain was to the east-south-east, the white stratum being less horizontal in this portion. This curious white stripe in the hills extended over an arc of a circle from 70° (east-north-east) to 320° (north-west).

We made great purchases of provisions in Lawah—sheep, chickens, eggs, vegetables and fruit, the slaughtered chickens being carefully prepared in layers of salt to make them last as long as possible. Then we purchased a number of sheep skins to carry a further supply of drinking water, for from this place, we were told, we should be several days without finding any. Sadek was busy all day smearing these skins with molten butter to make them absolutely water tight, and I, on my part, was glad to see all the butter go in this operation, for with the intense heat of the day it was impossible to touch it with one's food. Sadek's idea of good cooking was intense richness—everything floating in grease and butter; so these skins, which absorbed all the butter we had, were really a godsend to me—as far as the *cuisine* of the future was concerned.

There was something in the climate of Lawah that made one feverish and irritable. In the afternoon some of the camel men had a fight with a number of Lawah people, and later the camel men in a body attacked Sadek. He was very plucky and quick—they were heavy but clumsy—so that Sadek succeeded with a heavy mallet in giving them several cracks on the head, but as they were eight to one and closed in upon him and were about to give him a good hammering, I had to rush to his assistance and with the butt of my rifle scattered the lot about. For a moment they seemed as if they were going to turn on me; they were very excited and seized whatever they could lay their hands upon in the shape of sticks and stones, but I casually put a few cartridges in the magazine of my rifle and sat down again on my carpets to continue writing my diary. They came to beg pardon for the trouble they had given, and embraced my feet, professing great humility.

Four camels of the combined caravans had been taken ill with fever and had to be left behind. Their cries from pain were pitiful. Owing to the abundant dinner we got here, with lavish supplies of meat, fruit—most delicious figs, pomegranates and water melons—of which we partook more copiously than wisely, all the men got attacks of indigestion, and so did my poor little kittens, who had stuffed themselves to their hearts' content with milk and the insides of chickens; so that when night came, everybody being ill, we were unable to make a start.

At sunset, with the sudden change in the temperature, and the revulsion from intense dryness to the sudden moisture of the dew, a peculiar feeling took possession of me, and I could feel that I was fast inhaling the miasma of fever. The natives shut themselves up inside their houses—for sunset, they say, and sunrise are the times when fever is contracted,—but we were out in the open and had no protection against it. It seems to seize one violently from the very beginning and sends up one's temperature extremely high, which produces a fearful exhaustion, with pains in the ribs, arms and spinal column.



WOLVES IN CAMP.

The altitude of Lawah is 4,420 ft. and therefore the nights are terribly cold in contrast to the stifling heat of the day. I had wrapped myself up in my blankets, shivering with the fever that had seized me quite violently, and the kittens were playing about near my bed. My men were all sound asleep and only the occasional hoarse roar of the squatted camels all round our camp broke the silence of the night. I eventually fell asleep with my hat over my face screening it from the heavy fall of dew.

Suddenly I woke up, startled by the kittens dashing under my blankets and sticking their claws into me and making a fearful racket, and also by some other animals sniffing my face. I jumped up, rifle in hand, for indeed there were some wolves visiting our camp. One—a most impudent rascal—was standing on one of my boxes, and another had evidently made a dash for the white cat; hence the commotion.

The wolves bolted when I got up—I could not fire owing to the camels and people being all round—but the kittens did not stir from their hiding place until the next morning, when in broad day-light they cautiously peeped out to see that the danger had passed.

With the coming day the gruesome reality had to be faced, that one and all of my party had contracted fever of the desert in more or less violent form, even the kittens, who sneezed and trembled the whole day. Some of the camels, too, were unwell and lay with their long necks resting upon the ground and refused to eat. The prospects of crossing the most difficult part of the desert with such a sorry party were not very bright, but we made everything ready, and at ten o'clock in the evening we were to make a start.

I purchased here a third and most beautiful cat—a weird animal, and so wild that when let out of the bag in which it had been brought to me, he covered us all over with scratches. He was three months old, and had quite a will of his own. When introduced to Master Kerman and Miss Zeris, there were reciprocal growls and arched backs, and when asked to share their travelling home for the night there was evident objection and some exchange of spitting. But as there were four corners in the wooden box and only three cats, they eventually settled down, one in each, watching the new comer with wide expanded eyes and fully outstretched claws, merely for defensive emergencies, but otherwise quite peacefully inclined.

CHAPTER V

Salt sediments as white as snow—Brilliant stars—Plaintive songs of the camel men
—An improvisatore—Unpleasant odour of camels—A large salt deposit—No water
and no fuel—A device to protect oneself against great heat—Amazing intelligence of
cats—Nature's ways and men's ways—A hot climb—A brilliantly coloured range—
Sea shells and huge fossils.

ON November 11th at ten o'clock P.M. we gladly left poisonous Lawah and spent the night (November 12th) traversing a mountain region by a flattish and low pass, and then travelling due north entered the actual *Dasht-i-lut*—the sandy Salt Desert, the sediment of surface salt being in some places so thick and white as to resemble snow. Here and there some hillocks of sand relieved the monotony of the dreary journey, otherwise flat sand and surface salt extended as far as the eye could see.

The nights, even when there was no moonlight, were so clear, and the stars and planets so brilliant, that with a little practice one could, for general purposes, see almost as well as by day.

The night was terribly cold, which I felt all the more owing to the fever, as I hung resting my head on the padded pommel of the saddle and my legs and arms dangling at the sides. A howling, cutting wind blew and made it impossible to cover one's self up with blankets, as they were constantly being blown away, no matter how well one tucked one's self in them.

There was a certain picturesque weirdness in these night marches in the desert—when one could dissociate one's self from the discomforts. The camel men had some sad, plaintive songs of their own—quite melodious and in good tune with the accompaniment of dingling bells hanging from the camels' necks. There was a musician in our party—Ali Murat's young brother—who carried a flute in his girdle during the day, but played upon the instrument the whole night—some doleful tunes of his own composition, which were not bad. True, when one had listened to the same tune, not only scores but hundreds of times during one night, one rather felt the need of a change, but still even the sound of his flute was a great relief in the dreary night marches. Occasionally, when the fancy took him, and he made some variations in the airs, the camel men, who slept while mechanically walking, would join in to sing in a chorus.

Overhead the stars gleamed with a brightness that we can never dream of seeing in Europe, and in the distance we now began to perceive some phantom-like hills rising from the whitish-grey surface of the desert. A good deal of the poetry of the desert is, nevertheless, lost each time that the camel on which you ride breathes. Behold! one is brought to earth very soon! The rancid smell which comes in regular whiffs is sickening. So is the powerful stench of his hump when it gets heated by the pads of the never-removed saddle.

About every two miles a few minutes' rest is given to the camels, then on again they slowly swing forward, the nose of one being attached by a long string to the tail rope of the preceding animal.



AUTHOR'S CAMEL MEN IN THEIR WHITE FELT COATS.



CAMEL MEN SAYING THEIR PRAYERS AT SUNSET.

Twenty miles from Lawah, mud-hills covering underlying rock were reached, and closed us in on either side. Two miles further, when it got too hot to proceed—thermometer 148° in the sun and not a thread of shade—we halted on a white salt deposit of considerable extent. There was no water and no fuel, and the heat was well-nigh unbearable in the middle of the day. It was useless to pitch my tent, for in such stifling heat it is not possible to remain under it, nor could one breathe at all if one tried to get a little shade by screening one's self against a wall of loads which impeded the air moving.

My camel men showed me a device which by the ignorant may be ridiculed, but to the sensible is a great blessing when exposed to abnormally high temperatures. The only way to protect one's self against the broiling air is to cover one's self, head and all, leaving space to breathe, with one or two thick blankets of wool or thick felt, of a white or light colour preferably, white being a non-absorbent of the hot sun's rays. The thickness of the cloth keeps the body at an enveloping temperature slightly above the temperature of the body itself (even when with high fever seldom more than 104°), and therefore a cooler temperature than outside the blankets, when it is frequently 148° sometimes 150° and even more. By contrast this seems quite cool. It is, in other words, a similar process to that used by us in summer to maintain ice from melting.

In Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Arabia, the people who are much exposed to the rays of the hot sun in deserts always wear extremely thick woollen clothing, or berouses; and in Persia the camel men of the desert, as we have seen, possess thick white felt coats in which they wrap themselves, head and all, during the hot hours of the day. The Italians, too, seem to have been fully aware of this, for in Naples and Southern Italy they have an ancient proverb in the Neapolitan dialect:—*Quel che para lo freddo para lo caldo*—“What is protection against cold is protection against heat.”

I know one Englishman in Southern Persia who, when crossing the broiling plains of Arabistan, wears a thick overcoat and plenty of woollen underwear—a method which he learnt from the nomad tribes of Arabistan—but he is generally laughed at by his countrymen who do not know any better. This cooling device, naturally, only applies to tropical climates when the temperature of the air is greatly above the actual temperature of the blood.

I had arranged with the caravan that accompanied mine to carry fodder for my camels, as there was no grazing for the animals here. Large cloths were spread on which straw and cotton-seeds were mixed together, and then the camels were made to kneel round and have a meal.

On this occasion I was much struck by the really marvellous intelligence of cats. We hear a lot about dogs finding their way home from long distances by using their sense of scent (how far this explanation is correct we have no time to discuss), but of cats the general belief is that if they are taken away from home they seldom find their way back. This may be the case with cats that have always been shut up in some particular house, but it is not that they do not possess the intellect to do so in their natural state. Here is an instance.

On letting the cats loose when we halted, the newly-purchased one attempted to make his escape. I was watching him carefully. He did not do this in a haphazard manner, running here and there as a dog would, but jumped out of the box, took his bearings with great calm and precision and in a most scientific manner, first by looking at the sun, and then at his own shadow, evidently to discover whether when shut up in the box he had travelled east or west, north or south, or to some intermediate point. He repeated this operation several times with a wonderful expression of intelligence and reflection on his little face, and then dashed away with astounding accuracy in the direction of Lawah town. Mind you, he did not at all follow the track that we had come by, which

was somewhat circuitous, but went in a bee line for his native place and not a second to the left or right of the direct bearings which I took with my prismatic compass to check his direction. Sadek and the camel men went in pursuit of him and he was brought back.

This seemed so marvellous that I thought it might be a chance. We were then only twenty-two miles from Lawah. I repeated the experiment for three or four days from subsequent camps, until the cat reconciled himself to his new position and declined to run away. I took the trouble to revolve him round himself several times to mislead him in his bearings, but each time he found his correct position by the sun and his own shadow, and never made a mistake in the absolutely correct bearings of his route.

A remarkable fact in connection with this is that the most ignorant natives of Persia, men who have never seen or heard of a compass, can tell you the exact direction of places by a very similar method, so that there is more in the process than we think.

It is rather humiliating when we reflect that what we highly civilised people can only do with difficulty with the assistance of elaborate theodolites, sextants, artificial horizons, compasses and lengthy computations, an ignorant camel man, or a kitten, can do practically and simply and always correctly in a few seconds by drawing conclusions on facts of nature which speak for themselves better than all the scientific instruments we can manufacture.

There was a high mountain north-east of camp, the Darband, 8,200 feet, and as my fever seemed to be getting worse, and I had no quinine with which to put a sudden stop to it, I thought I would climb to the top of the mountain to sweat the fever out, and also to obtain a view of the surrounding country.

After having slept some three hours and having partaken of a meal—we had the greatest difficulty in raising enough animal fuel for a fire—I started off about one in the afternoon under a broiling sun. The camp was at an altitude of 4,350 feet and the ascent not difficult but very steep and rocky, and involving therefore a good deal of violent exertion. The dark rocks were so hot with the sun that had been shining upon them that they nearly burned one's fingers when one touched them. Still, the view from the top well repaid one for the trouble of getting there.

A general survey showed that the highest mountain to be seen around was to the south-south-east (150° bearings magnetic), and a couple of almost conical hills, exactly alike in shape, but not in size, stood one in front of the other on a line with 160° b.m. Between them both to east and west were a number of misshapen mountains. Were it not for a low confused heap of grey mud and sand the desert would be an absolutely flat stretch from the distant mountains enclosing the plain on the south to the others on the north. A long high mud barrier runs diagonally at the northern end, in a direction from east to west, and another extending from south-east to north-west meets it, forming a slightly acute angle. The latter range is of a most peculiar formation, extremely brilliant in colour, the ground being a vivid red, regularly fluted and striped across so straight with friezes and bands formed by strata of different tones of colour, that from a distance it almost resembles the patient work of a skilful artisan instead of the results of the corrosive action of water. Another parallel and similar range stands exactly opposite on the east.

The mountain itself to which I had climbed was most interesting. Imbedded in the rock were quantities of fossil white and black sea-shells, and about half way up the mountain a huge fossil, much damaged, resembling a gigantic turtle. Near it on the rock were impressions of enormous paws.

CHAPTER VI

A long detour—Mount Darband—A water-cut gorge—Abandoned watch towers—Passes into the desert—A wall-like mountain range—The tower and fortified caravanserai at camp Darband—Brackish water—Terrific heat—Compensating laws of nature better than absurd patents—Weird rocks—Cairns—Chel-payeh salt well—Loss of half our supply of fresh water—Camels and men overcome by the heat.

WHEN we left camp soon after midnight on November 13th, we had to make quite a long detour to take the caravan around the Darband Mountain, which barred our way directly on the course we were to follow. On foot one could have taken a short cut in a more direct line by climbing up to a certain height on the western mountain slope, but it was out of the question to take camels up by it. We had to go some distance due north, through very broken country with numerous hillocks, after which we followed a narrow gorge cut deep by the action of water. The sides of this gorge were like high mud and gravel walls, occasionally rocks worn smooth, averaging from 60 to 100 feet apart.

The river bed, now absolutely dry, evidently carried into the desert during the torrential rain all the drainage of the mountainous country we had traversed, practically that from Abid, the Leker Mountains, and the combined flow of the Lawah plain from the mountains to the west of it, to which, of course, may be added the western watershed of the Darband Mountain itself. A glance at the natural walls, between which we were travelling, and the way in which hard rocks had been partly eaten away and deeply grooved, or huge hollows bored into them, was sufficient to show the observer with what terrific force the water must dash its way through this deep-cut channel. The highest water-mark noticeable on the sides was twenty-five feet above the bed. The impetus with which the rain water must flow down the almost vertical fluted mountain sides must be very great, and immense also must be the body of water carried, for the mountain sides, being rocky, absorb very little of the rain falling upon them and let it flow down to increase the foaming stream—when it is a stream.

Some sixteen miles from our last camp we came across a circular tower, very solidly built, standing on the edge of a river cliff, and higher up on a ridge of hills in a commanding position stood the remains of two quadrangular towers in a tumbling-down condition. Of one, in fact, there remained but a portion of the base; of the other three walls were still standing to a good height. The circular tower below, however, which seemed of later date, was in good preservation. According to the camel men, none of these towers were very ancient and had been put up to protect that passage from the robber bands which occasionally came over westward from Sistan and Afghanistan. It had, however,

proved impossible to maintain a guard in such a desolate position, hence the abandonment of these outposts.

This is one of the three principal passages by which the mountains can be crossed with animals from Kerman towards the east (north of the latitude of Kerman $30^{\circ} 17' 30''$). The other two passages are: one to Khabis over a pass (north-east of Kerman) in the Husseinabad Mountains; the second between the Derun Mountain and the Leker Kuh from Abid, also to Khabis. From the latter place it is also possible to cross the Desert to Birjand, but the lack of water even at the best of times makes it a very dangerous track to follow both for men and animals. Barring these passages there are high mountains protecting Kerman and continuously extending, roughly, from N.N.W. to S.S.E.

We travelled partly above the high cliffs, then, near the circular tower, we descended to the dry river-bed of well-rounded pebbles and sand. Our course had gradually swerved to the south-east, then we left the river bed once more and went due east, over confused masses of mud hillocks from twenty to a hundred feet high. To the north we had a wall-like mountain range formed of superposed triangles of semi-solidified rock, the upper point of each triangle forming either an angle of 45° or a slightly acute angle; and to the south also another wall-like range, quite low, but of a similar character to the northern ones. Beyond it, to the south-west, twenty miles back (by the way followed) lay the Darband Mountain, on the other side of which we had made our previous camp.

The camp at which we halted bore the name of Darband, and from this point the desert again opened into a wide flat expanse. The mountains to the north suddenly ended in a crowded succession of low mud-hills, descending for about a mile into the flat. The desert in all its dignified grandeur, spread before us almost uninterruptedly from due north to south-east, as far as the eye could see. North, a long way off, one could perceive a low range of hills extending in an easterly direction, and beyond at 30° bearings magnetic (about N.N.E.) rose a very high mountain and yet another very far north-east, with some isolated conical hills of fair height standing before it in the same direction; otherwise everything else in front of us was as flat and as barren as could be.

At Darband halting place there is an interesting old circular tower, much battered, as if it had seen some fighting. The attacks on it seem to have taken place mostly from the south-westerly side, which aspect bears evident marks of violent assaults. The tower is most cleverly loopholed, so as to protect the inmates while firing on the enemy, and has a look-out house on the top. For additional protection the entrance door is about twenty feet above the ground and can only be reached by a ladder, which was drawn up in cases of emergency.

A large dilapidated and filthy caravanserai—a regular fortress with a watch tower of its own and loop-holes all round—is erected in the vicinity in another commanding position. In the gully below there is a small oasis of palm trees and a few square yards of vegetation alongside a small spring of brackish water—the only water there is—with a reservoir. Next to this, west of the caravanserai, are the remains of a few mud huts in ruins.

We were here only 3,780 feet above the sea. The heat was terrific.



AUTHOR'S CAMELS BEING FED IN THE DESERT.

Brackish water is not pleasant to drink, but it is not necessarily unhealthy. Personally, I am a great believer in the compensating laws of Nature in preference to the ill-balanced habits of civilised men, and am certain that the best thing one can drink in the desert, under the abnormal conditions of heat, dust and dryness, is salt water, which stimulates digestion and keeps the system clean. Of filters, condensing apparatuses, soda-water cartridges, and other such appliances for difficult land travelling, the less said the better. They are very pretty toys, the glowing advertisements of which may add to the profits of geographical magazines, but they are really more useful in cities in Europe than practical in the desert. Possibly they may be a consolation to a certain class of half-reasoning people. But anything else, it might be argued would serve equally well. One sees them advertised as preventatives of malarial fever, but no sensible person who has ever had fever or seen it in others would ever believe that it comes from drinking water. Fever is in the atmosphere—one breathes fever; one does not necessarily drink it. When the water is corrupted, the air is also corrupted, and to filter the one and not the other is an operation the sense of which I personally cannot see.

It has ever been my experience, and that also of others, that the fewer precautions one takes, the more one relies on Nature to take care of one instead of on impracticable devices—the better for one's health in the end. I do not mean by this that one should go and drink dirty water to avoid fever, —far from it,—but if the water is dirty the best plan is not to drink it at all, whether filtered—or, to be accurate, passed through a filter—or not, or made into soda-water!

One fact is certain, that if one goes through a fever district one can take all the precautions in the world, but if one's system is so inclined one is sure to contract it; only the more the precautions, the more violent the fever.

But to return to our specific case, brackish water is not necessarily dirty, and as I have said, is to my mind one of Nature's protections against fever of the desert. In my own case, when I partook of it freely, it decidedly kept the fever down.

We made a much earlier start, at 8 P.M., on November 13th, and I had to walk part of the way as it was too steep for the camels. We had great trouble in taking them down to the dry river-bed—which we were to follow, being quite flat and therefore easier for the animals. We went along between low hills, getting lower and lower, and some two miles from the Darband tower we emerged into the open, the river-bed losing itself here in the desert.

During the night of the 13th-14th we travelled 28 miles on the flat until we came to more low hills, which we entered by another river-bed, also dry. We had come in a north-north-east direction so far, but we now turned due east among high, flat-topped hills which resembled a mass of ruined Persian houses of a quadrangular shape, so strangely had they been carved out by the corrosive action of water. They were of solid rock, and eaten into holes here and there, which from a distance gave the appearance of windows and doors, and of caves.

The river-bed on which we travelled was of soft sand—very troublesome—and minute gravel strewn here and there with large boulders fallen from the cliffs at the sides. Cairns had been erected in various prominent points by caravan men, to show future travellers the way to Naiband for Birjiand and Meshed.

Following this in an easterly direction we came to a large basin, and then further on to another. We continued in zig-zag for a short distance, when we arrived at a place where the river-bed makes an elbow, turning to the north. At this spot a caravanserai was in course of construction, built at the expense of some charitable person. There was only one well of brackish water, and very little of that, too. The workmen would not let us partake of it. Everything, of course, had to be brought, as nothing could be obtained there, and the few workmen complained bitterly of the hardships they had to endure in going on with their work. They feared they would soon run short even of water. They were all fever-stricken, and two quite in a pitiable condition. They had little food left; most of their animals had died, and they were unable to leave. Chel-Payeh was the name of this well (altitude 4,420 feet).

We were thirty-two miles from our last camp, and reached here at 8 A.M. On taking the loads down we had a great disappointment. Sadek, who was not accustomed to ride camels, was suffering considerably, and in order to make himself comfortable he had contrived a clever device to avoid coming in immediate contact with the wooden frame of his saddle. He had fastened the two largest skins we had with our supply of good water on the top of his saddle, and having covered them over with blankets and carpets, on them, he sat and slept through the whole night. Alas! the weight of his body burst both skins during the night and squeezed all the water out!

So here we were, with only two small skins of fresh water left, which would have to last the whole party several days. But we were to have a further misfortune on the following march.

The heat was intense—146° in the sun—not an inch of shade in the middle of the day, and the river-bed being cut into the plain, and therefore lower than the surface of the remainder of the desert, the lack of a current of air made this spot quite suffocating; so much so that both camels and men were getting quite overcome by the heat, and we had to start off early in the afternoon at 4 o'clock.

CHAPTER VII

Fortress-like cliffs—A long troublesome march—Sixteen hours on the saddle—All our fresh-water supply gone!—Fever—Electricity of the desert—Troublesome camel men—A small oasis—An ancient battered tower—A giant—Naiband mountain and village—Rock habitations—A landmark in the desert.

FORTRESS-LIKE, vertical rocky cliffs rose to our left and enormous boulders tumbled down to our right. Our direction was due north. On our right, as we were again entering the flat desert, a quadrangular fort of natural formation stood on the mountain-side.

We did not halt for dinner as we could find no fuel to do the cooking with, and we marched all night (November 15th)—a most painful march, for the camels were all more or less sick and tired, and they dragged themselves jerkily, grunting and making the most awful noises all night.

My fever got very bad and I was seized with bad pains in my ribs and spine. Sadek and the camel men complained of feeling very ill, and the cats remonstrated from their high perch at not being let out of their box at the customary hour. To add to our happiness, one of my camels, carrying some air-tight cases with sharp brass corners, collided with the camel conveying the precious load of the two remaining water-skins which hung on its sides, and, of course, as fate would have it, the brass corners wrenched the skin and out flowed every drop of water, which was avidly absorbed by the dry sand.



THE TRAIL WE LEFT BEHIND IN THE SALT DESERT.

The character of the country was the same as on the previous day, a long stretch of flat, then undulations, after which we entered another dry canal cut deep, with vertical rocky sides, very similar to the Chel-Payeh except that in the bed of the gorge itself there were now enormous flat

slabs of stone instead of sand and gravel, as the day before. Further on we were surrounded by low hills, which we crossed by a pass, and after having been on the saddle continuously for sixteen hours we halted at eight o'clock A.M. in the middle of a broiling, barren stretch of sand, gravel and shingle.

After so long a march, and under such unpleasant conditions, our throats and tongues were parched with thirst. Fortunately, we still had one skin of water left, I thought, so my first impulse was to hasten to have it taken off the saddle that we might all have a sip. But misfortune pursued us. On approaching the camel that carried it, the animal was all wet on one side, and I fully realised what to expect. Sadek, with a long face of dismay, took down the flabby empty skin; the water had all dripped out of it, and here we were, in the middle of the desert, no well, whether salt or otherwise, and not a thimbleful of water!

The very thought that we could get nothing to drink made us ten times more thirsty, and we seemed to be positively roasting under the fierce sun. The camel men threw themselves down upon their felt coats and moaned and groaned, and the camels, who had drunk or eaten nothing for three days, appeared most unhappy and grunted pitifully.

For want of better remedy we sucked pebbles, which stimulated salivation and allayed the thirst to a certain extent, but with the high fever, which brought about fearful exhaustion and severe aches, and the unpleasant, abundant electricity in the air caused by the intense dryness—which has a most peculiar effect on one's skin—we none of us felt particularly happy. The three cats were the only philosophers of the party and were quite sympathetic. They amused themselves by climbing up the camel's long necks, just as they would up a tree, to the evident discomfort of the larger animals. They had a particular fancy for sitting on the camels' bushy heads.

The electricity with which the air of the desert is absolutely saturated is gradually absorbed by the human body and stored as in an accumulator. On touching the barrel of a rifle or any other good conductor of electricity, one would discharge an electric spark of some length. By rubbing one's woollen blankets with one's hands one could always generate sufficient electricity to produce a spark; and as for the cats, if one touched them they always gave out a good many sparks. At night, if one caressed them, there was quite a luminous greenish glow under one's fingers as they came into contact with the hair. Quite a brilliant flash ensued when the cats were rubbed with a woollen blanket.

We had only risen about 100 feet to 4,520 feet from our last camp, and we steered N.N.E. for the high Naiband Mountain.

The camel men, taking advantage of my being ill, were very troublesome and attempted some of their tricks; but although I was absolutely at their mercy I screwed up what little strength I had and brought them back to their senses. The camels, they said, were very ill, and we could not possibly go on. We certainly could not stop where we were, and I most decidedly would not go back, so, when night came, on we went leaving camp at 10 P.M. and travelling first over a great flat stretch, then among low hills and through several ravines cut by water. We travelled some ten hours at a good pace, and when nearing the Naiband Mountain the country became quite undulating.

On November 16th we arrived in a small oasis of high palm trees, with a streamlet of salt water forming a pool or two, dirty to a degree owing to the bad habits of camels when drinking. Our camels, who had drunk nothing for several days, on perceiving these pools made a dash for them and sucked to their hearts' content gallons of water of a ghastly reddish-green tint, almost as thick as syrup with mud and organic matter, but which they seemed to enjoy all the same.

There was here a much battered tower, attributed, to Beluch, who are said to have fought here most bravely in times gone by, but more probably of Afghan origin—or at least erected during the time of the Afghan invasion. It is said to be some centuries old, but here again it is well to have one's doubts upon the matter.

As I was examining the tower, which has undoubtedly seen some terrific fighting, a giant man emerged from the palm trees and came towards us. He was some 6 feet 6 inches in height, and being slender, with a small head, appeared to be even taller than he really was. He strode disjointedly towards us and was somewhat peculiar in manner and speech. He examined us very closely and then ran away up to the village—a quaint old place perched high on the mountain side and with eight picturesque towers. Most of these towers were round, but a large quadrangular one stood apart on a separate hill.

There were innumerable holes in the rock, which were at one time habitations, but are used now as stables mostly for donkeys, of which there were a great number in the place. The rock on which the village stood is very rugged and difficult of access, as can be seen by the photograph which I took, and the architecture of the buildings had a character peculiar to itself and differed very considerably from any other houses we had met in Persia. They were flat-roofed, with very high walls, and four circular apertures to answer the purpose of windows about half-way up the wall. The roof was plastered and made a kind of verandah, where the natives spread fruit and vegetables to dry and the women had their small weaving looms. On one side of the rock, where the greater number of habitations were to be found, they actually appeared one on the top of the other, the front door of one being on the level with the roof of the underlying one.



AUTHOR'S CARAVAN DESCENDING INTO RIVER BED NEAR DARBAND.



ROCK HABITATIONS, NAIBAND.

The path to the village was very steep, tortuous and narrow. The village extended from south-west to north-east on the top of the mountain, and the separate quadrangular tower occupied a prominent position to its eastern extremity. There were palm trees and fields both to the south and east at the foot of the rocky mountain on which the village stood, and to the W.N.W. (300° bearings magnetic) of it towered the majestic Naiband Mountain mass, very high, one of the great landmarks of the Dasht-i-Lut, the Salt Desert.

Directly above the village of Naiband was a peak from which, although of no great altitude—4,500 ft.—one got a beautiful bird's-eye view both of the village and the surrounding country. An immense stretch of desert spread below us, uninterrupted from north-east to south except by a small cluster of hillocks directly under us, and by the continuation towards the south-west of the Naiband mountainous mass; a high mountain lay to (170° bearings magnetic) S.S.E. The highest peak of the Naiband was to the north of the village, and the mountainous region extended also in a direction further north beyond the mountain that gives its name to the whole mass. S.S.E. (150° b.m.) of the village down in the plain rose an island of hills and also a few more to the east.

The desert was rather more undulating in the eastern portion, but absolutely flat towards the south-west and to the south, while north-east of the village stood a weird collection of picturesquely confused brown-red and whitish mountains.

Most of the cultivation—only a few patches—was visible to the S.W. and E.N.E. of the village. Palm trees were numerous. A spring of fresh water ran down the mountain side, through the main street of the village, and down into the fields, in the irrigation of which it lost itself.

CHAPTER VIII

A visit to the eight-towered village—A hostile demonstration—Quaint houses—Stoned—Brigand villagers—A device—Peculiar characteristics of natives—Picturesque features—Constant intermarriage and its effects—Nature's freaks—Children—Elongating influence of the desert—Violent women—Beasts of burden—Photography under difficulty—Admirable teeth of the natives—Men's weak chests—Clothing—A farewell demonstration—Fired at.

I CLIMBED up to the village, accompanied by one of my camel men, but our friend the giant had preceded us and given the warning that a *ferenghi* had arrived, and we were met on the road by a number of boys and men who were running down the hill to see the new arrival. The people were not particularly respectful, and freely passed remarks, not always complimentary—in fact, most offensive; but as I was bent on seeing all that there was to be seen, I paid no heed and continued to go up.



THE VILLAGE OF NAIBAND, AND ROCK DWELLINGS IN THE CLIFF.

The camel man, who was getting quite alarmed—especially when a stone or two were flung at us—begged me to return to camp, but I would not, and as I had my rifle with me I thought I could hold my own, and certainly did not wish the natives to think that an Englishman feared them.

It appears that a European had visited this spot some time previously, and they had some grievance against him, but although it seemed rather hard that I should come in for the punishment which should have been meted to my predecessor, I well knew that the only way out of the scrape was to face the music. To run away would have been fatal.

So we entered the village by a narrow path, while men, women and children collected on the house-tops and in the doorways and gesticulated and spouted away as fine a collection of insults as one may expect to listen to in one's life. The Naiband people may certainly be congratulated on the possession of a most extensive and complete vocabulary of swear words.

Pretending unconcern, but keeping a watchful eye on what was taking place all round, I stopped here and there to examine the small water-skins hanging in couples or more outside each doorway, and halted in the small square of the village to admire the wretched buildings all round.

The lower portion of the houses was of mud, the upper of stone. Down the side of the main street gurgled the limpid little stream. Each house had a sort of walled recess outside the front door, reached by a step or two, where tilling tools rested against the wall, and where the women's spinning wheels were worked during the day. The wheels, however, were now idle, for the women had joined the men in the demonstration.

It was most evident that *ferenghis* were not popular at Naiband, but, come what might, here I was, and here I would stay as long as it suited me. A stone flung with considerable force hit me in the knee—stones always have a way of striking you in the most sensitive spots—and it took me some minutes before I could recover from the pain and move on; but I never let the natives suspect what agony I was enduring, or they would have done worse.

The slow march through the village up to the highest point was decidedly not pleasant, missiles flying pretty plentifully all round. Fortunately, no more hit me quite as badly again. The camel man had warned me that the population of Naiband was a mixture of robbers and cut-throats, and the facts fully proved his words, so I was rather glad that I had taken not only my rifle with me but a pocketful of cartridges as well.

Things were getting rather hot, and it was only when, having reached a high point of vantage, I stopped and, in full view of the crowd, inserted a five cartridge clip in the magazine of my Mannlicher, that most anxious inquiries were made from the camel man as to what I was about to do. The camel man, amid a sudden silence and eager attention, explained the terrific powers of a *ferenghi's* rifle which, he said, never misses and ever kills, even ten miles off; and to add more humour to his words he explained that shots could be fired so quick that one had not time to count them.

At this point of the lecture I casually produced a handful of cartridges from my coat pocket, and having counted them aloud, proceeded to count the people, who watched, somewhat flabbergasted. The device answered perfectly. They dropped the stones which, during the short armistice, they had carefully nursed in their hands, and some thought they had better return to their homes, the bolder ones only remaining, who put a grin of friendship on their faces, and made signs that they would try to do no further harm.

Peace being proclaimed, and after making them pay their salaams, which seemed the most unusual thing they ever had to do in their lifetime, I spoke to them in a friendly way and patted them on the back. They were much impressed with the rifle and wanted me to let them see it in their own hands, which, of course, I did not do. They showed me some of their houses, which were very dirty—people, fowls, and in some cases a donkey or a goat, occupying the same room.

These brigand villagers were most interesting as a type. They were quite unlike the Persians of the West, and they certainly had nothing in common with the Afghan; nor did they resemble the people of the northern part of Persia. The Beluch type came nearer. It would be curious to trace exactly where they came from—although undoubtedly their features must have been greatly modified, even altogether altered, by the climatic conditions of the spot they live in.

One was struck by the abnormal length, thinness and disjointedness of their limbs, and by the long, well-chiselled faces, with handsome aquiline noses, broad and high foreheads, well-defined eyebrows in a straight line across the brow, piercing eyes well protected by the brow and drooping at the outer corners, with quite a hollow under the lower eyelid; very firm mouths full of expression and power, also drooping slightly at the corners, and high cheek bones.



YOUNG MEN OF AN OASIS IN THE DESERT.



MAN AND CHILD OF THE DESERT.

Their appearance was certainly most picturesque, and they possessed the cat-like manner and general ways of feline animals which made them appear rather unreliable but in a way quite attractive. They were evidently people accustomed to high-handed ways, and they needed very careful handling. They were frank and resolute enough in their speech—ever talking at the top of their voices, which, however, sounded quite musical and not grating.

They possessed dirty but very beautifully-formed hands and feet, the thumb only being somewhat short and stumpy, but the fingers supple, long and tapering. The few lines which they possessed in the palms of their hands were very strongly marked. There was a good deal of refinement about their facial features and hands which made me think that these people came from a good stock, and even the ears—which were generally malformed with all the natives of Persia which had so far come under my observation—were in this case much more delicately modelled and infinitely better shaped. The chins were beautifully chiselled, even when somewhat slanting backwards.

I give here a photograph which I took of two typical young men, and which I think bears out my remarks.

There was an extraordinary family resemblance in nearly all the heads one saw, which made one suspect constant intermarriage among relations in the small community. In fact, on asking, they professed to be all related to one another.

Another very curious point about the faces of the male members of Naiband village, which contrasted with other natives of Persia, was that, whereas the latter can grow heavy beards from a comparatively very tender age, the Naiband young men were quite hairless on the face, almost like Mongolians—even at twenty or twenty-two years of age. When they had reached a fairly advanced age, however, some forty years, they seemed to grow quite a good black beard and heavy moustache, somewhat curly, never very long, and of a finer texture than with modern Persians. The hair of the skull was perfectly straight, and was worn long, parted in the middle, with an occasional fringe on the forehead.

Nature's freaks are many and varied. While the men had invariably long aquiline noses, elongated faces, and eyes well protected by the brow, the children, until the age of ten or twelve, had rather stumpy faces with noses actually turned up, and most beautiful large eyes softened by abnormally long eyelashes, the eyes themselves, strangely enough, being quite *à fleur de tête*. I noticed this curious phenomenon in members of the same family, and the older ones told me that when they were young their faces were also stubby and their noses turned up.

The inference I drew was that it must be the climatic conditions of the desert that have the elongating effect, not only upon the facial features, but on all the limbs of the people. The people were not naturally born elongated. The climate certainly has an elongating effect on plants, or leaves, which all tend to come to a point, such as the leaves of the elongated palm trees, for instance, or any of the other spiky plants one finds in parts of the desert.

There was a good deal of the demon about the women of the place, a superabundance of fire in their movements and in the expression of their flashing eyes, which was a great contrast to the slow, dignified manner of the men, when seen under normal circumstances. Their frame was much more powerfully built than that of the men. The ladies seemed to be in a perpetual state of anger. That they were industrious there could be no mistake, and one could but be amazed at their muscular strength in lifting heavy loads; but, taking things all round, one was rather glad to have no friends among the Naiband fair sex when one saw how their men, relations or otherwise, were pulled about by them. The men positively feared them, and the women seemed to have it all their own way.

They were so violent that it was most difficult to approach them, but with some careful coaxing I succeeded in persuading the wildest and most typical of the lot to sit for her photograph, which I look upon as quite an achievement, considering that it might have cost her life or mine or both. As it was it went pretty well, and when I gave her a few silver pieces, she screamed with delight and sounded them on a stone to make sure they were good.

Women blackened their eyes underneath artificially, which gave them a languid but ardent appearance. Their long, wild, curly hair hung loose at the side of the head, over which they wore a kerchief fastened into a knot under the chin. Their costume was simple, a mere short blue cotton skirt reaching below the knee, and a little red loose shirt with ample sleeves. Various silver ornaments and charms, mainly old coins, hung round their necks from leather cords.

The arms and legs, quite bare, were well-shaped in most cases, and showed abnormal muscular development, due, no doubt, to the hard work the women were made to endure. They were positively used as beasts of burden—which occupation they seemed to like—while the men, I presume, lazily sat about smoking their tobacco or opium. But the body—very likely owing to the same reason—is, from a European point of view, quite shapeless, even in comparatively young women hardly above twenty. Their little blouses, generally torn or carelessly left open, display repulsively pendent breasts and overlapping waists, while the abdominal region, draped by a thin skirt, appeared much deformed by undue development.

These facts are given as they were typical of the majority of women in the place. The diet and the strain of lifting and carrying huge weights on the head may, to a certain extent, account for these evils. I also saw one or two cases of varicose veins.

The children seemed very pale and anaemic, a condition which has been mainly brought about, I think, by the constant intermarriage among relations.



NAIBAND BARBER STROPPING A RAZOR ON HIS LEG.



A WOMAN OF NAIBAND.

Men, women and children possessed admirable teeth, of a slightly yellowish tint, very thick, powerful and regular enough, although the front teeth were rather too long, especially in adults. They were, however, generally well protected and covered by the lips, almost invariably tightly closed.

The people, I noticed, had a tendency to breathe mostly through the nose. Their nostrils were wide, well-cut and healthy looking. They all possessed very keen eyesight, but not good hearing.

The want of expansion of the men's chests was a striking feature of masculine anatomy at Naiband, and, in fact, the profile silhouette of members of the Naiband strong sex was not unlike that of a phonograph trumpet resting on the ground, for they wore trousers of enormous size, divided skirts of the largest pattern, pure and simple, and little jackets over them with broad sleeves and buttoned over on the right shoulder. It seemed almost that the further we got into the desert the larger the trousers of the men in the oases. Some of the men had several yards of material draped round their legs, in Hindoo fashion, instead of trousers.

The colours of their clothes were white and dark blue, while their headgear consisted of a double skull cap, a thin, coloured one underneath and a light brown, thick felt one over it. The men were either barefooted or wore sandals.

Things went fairly well while we remained talking in the village, but in the meantime the entire population had turned out, and for some reason of their own again became rather boisterous. Having seen all there was to be seen I made my way down to camp as slowly as possible, followed by a howling mob. The moment one had one's back turned stones flew in abundance. The camel man and I went down the steep incline, and when we reached the last houses of the village a great number of people were congregated on the roofs, who gesticulated frantically and yelled something or other at

me as I passed. One or two of them had long matchlocks. We had gone but a few yards when a shot was fired at us, and a minute or so later another, but no damage was inflicted.

We went on with assumed calm and stopped, apparently to look at the scenery all round, but really to watch what the howling mob behind were doing, and eventually, when we reached the foot of the mountain and were out in the open instead of among rocks, the mob, taken by panic, bolted, and we saw them scrambling with great speed up the rocky path to the village like so many rabbits.

CHAPTER IX

Misfortunes—Suffocating heat—An expected attack—Electricity—Strayed camels—A barber and his ways—A track to Meshed—Pilgrim husband and wife across the desert—Another long march—A salt stream—Brackish well.

MANY misfortunes befel us at this place. We had made our camp in the oasis of palm trees at the foot of the mountain, and as the camels were much worn out we were unable to proceed on our journey the same evening. The heat during the night under the palm trees was quite suffocating, and I had to remove my bedding into the open where one could breathe a little better.

The camel men feared that during the night we might be attacked by the villagers and we made ready for any emergency, but nobody came.

There was so much electricity in the air that it gave quite an unpleasant feeling, and had a curious effect upon one's skin. The cats on coming in contact with the woollen blankets discharged sparks all over, and sparks also snapped from one's fingers on touching anything that was a good conductor of electricity.

A wild animal came into our camp during the night and carried away some newly-purchased hens. We had been told that there were many wolves and foxes in the neighbourhood.

In the morning we were confronted with what seemed a disaster. Eleven camels of our combined caravans had disappeared. Had they been stolen or had they run away? The camel men were in tears, and, instead of going to look for them, sat on the loads sobbing bitterly and wiping the tears from their eyes with the skirts of their long coats. A ray of hope arose when we discovered their tracks. They had made for some hot water springs, some miles to the east, and judging from their footprints were evidently travelling at a great pace. Two men on other camels were despatched after them, and we had to resign ourselves to a delay of another day.

Curiously enough, there was a sudden change in the temperature, and the thermometer in the sun only registered 105°, which made us feel quite chilly after the 140° and 150° of previous days. Our camp was at an altitude of 3,810 ft. (at the foot of the Naiband Mountain).

Sadek took the opportunity of the delay to set everything tidy, and we had a great washing day. He sent for a barber in the village to trim his hair and beard. The Naiband Figaro was an extraordinary creature, a most bare-faced rascal, who had plenty to say for himself, and whose peculiar ways and roaming eyes made us conceal away out of his sight all small articles, for fear that he should walk away with them. He carried all the tools of his trade around his waist in a belt, and ground his razor first on a stone which he licked with his tongue, then using his bare arms and legs for stropping purposes, as snapshotted in the accompanying photograph.

The camel men—on whom he was first requested to experiment—he shaved, splashing their faces with salt water during the process, but Sadek, the next victim, produced a cake of soap with which he luxuriously lathered his own face, and which the barber scraped gradually from the chin and cheeks and every now and then deposited the razor's wipings on his patient's head.

We were able to buy some fresh water skins, and this time they were really water tight. The natives, naturally, took every advantage of us in the bargains, but we were able to purchase a lot of fresh provisions, which we needed badly, and men and beasts felt none the worse for our compulsory halt.

In the middle of the second night we were waked up by some distant grunts, and the camel men jumped up in great glee as they had recognised the beloved voices of some of their strayed camels. A few minutes later, in fact, the whole eleven were brought back by the two men who had gone in search of them. They had found them some twenty miles off.

From Lawah to Naiband we had come practically due north, but from this camp to Birjand the way lay due east for the first portion of the journey. At 160° b.m. (S.S.E.) in the desert rose a high mountain.

We had everything ready for our departure, but the camel men were in a dreadful state as some villager had told them that the news had spread that the strong boxes which the *ferenghi* had were full of silver and gold—as a matter of fact there was hardly any left of either—and that a raid was being arranged for that night to kill us and rob our baggage when we were starting. The camel men spent the whole day polishing up the old rifles they possessed and, much to my concern for their safety, loaded them.

To allay their fears we made a sudden start at 5 P.M. instead of at the hour of 10 P.M. which had been previously arranged.

One mile beyond Naiband a track branches to the north-east for Meshed, and here we bade good-bye to a Persian husband and wife—he aged twenty-eight, she aged twelve—who in the company of a donkey, were on a pilgrimage from Yezd to the Sacred Shrine. We had picked them up in a sorry plight in the desert, the husband riding the lame donkey, the girl on foot and shoving both from behind. I could not help admiring their enterprise. All the provisions they had carried were a few cucumbers, figs, and a load of bread, nearly all of which were exhausted when we found them. On remonstrating with the strapping youth for riding the donkey while he made his poor wife walk, he replied that they had been newly married and it would not do for a man to show consideration for a wife so soon!

She, being a city girl, was a bundle of clothing and we could not see her face, but she seemed a nice meek little thing, with pretty hands and feet. On being asked whether she was tired, a thread of voice from under her *chudder* said she was, and on being invited to ride one of my camels on the top of a load, there was a giggle which meant "yes."

The selected camel was brought down on his knees, and Sadek and Ali Murat hauled her up in the most approved style; she having an evident joke at her selfish husband for having a better mount than he after all. Unfortunately, the poor child was so exhausted that after she had gone some distance, with the swaying of the camel she became fast asleep, lost her balance and fell on her head. Nobody delighted in the misfortune more than her lord and master, who did not fail to impress upon her that this was evidently Allah's punishment for her vanity in trying to be superior to her better half! Rubbing her aching skull, and much concerned at the *chudder* having got torn, the bride thought she had better resign herself to walk after all.

Here, too, as in other parts of the desert, near mountainous regions we found the usual deep, cut channels carrying into the desert the overflow of rain water from the Naiband Mountain, and the many little hills at its foot; otherwise in the thirty-six miles which we covered during the night there was absolutely nothing of interest.

When we had gone some ten miles from Naiband the camel men, tired of carrying their matchlocks, slung them to the saddles and professed the danger of an attack over. We were in the open again. I was much troubled by my fever, which had seized me violently and brought on aches all over my body.

We camped at 3,480 feet, having descended 330 feet in thirty-six miles, an almost perfectly flat stretch except a hillock or undulation here and there. My fever continued so fierce the whole day that I had not the strength to stand up nor the inclination to eat, the exhaustion caused by the very high temperature being indescribable.

We left at 7 P.M., meaning to make another long march. The night was intensely cold, with a terrific wind sweeping from the north-east. Several times during the night, when we came across a tamarisk shrub or two, we halted for a few minutes to make a bonfire and warm our frozen hands and toes. We actually came across a stream of brackish water—four feet broad, and about two to three inches deep—the largest stream we had seen since entering the desert, and having been twelve hours on the saddle to cover only twenty-four miles, camels and men shivering pitifully from the cold, and the latter also from fever, we made camp in a spot where there was an abundance of tamarisks and a deep well, the water of which was fully twenty feet below the earth's surface.

A small basin had been excavated next to the well. We filled it with water by means of a bucket, and it was a real pleasure to see the camels crowding round it and satisfying their thirst of two days. We did not allow them to drink the water of the brackish stream.

The elevation of this camp was 3,890 feet.

CHAPTER X

Intense cold—Dulled sense of taste—Characteristics of the country—Beautiful stones—Clouds of the desert—A salt stream—Icicles on the moustache and eyelashes—Longing for sunrise—Prayers of the camel men—Fedeshk—Ali Murat meets his wife—Opium dens and opium smokers—Effects of smoking opium in excess—Fever-stricken people—Dwellings—An official visitor—Science reduced to practice—Sadek's idea of sunset and sunrise—"Keshk" cheese—Arrival in Birjand.

We left camp at 8 P.M. on the night of November 20th-21st, and by midnight the cold grew intense. The camel men lighted big bonfires all through the night wherever they found a few shrubs, but I was so ill with fever that I had not the strength and energy to dismount from my camel, on which I was shivering with cold although well wrapped up in blankets.

After marching eight miles from our last camp we came to a brackish well where the camel men replenished their water-skins. I was rather interested to see what dulled sense of taste these men of the desert possessed. When I saw them making a rush for this well I thought that probably we had come to fresh water, and on asking them they said this was a well of excellent "sweet water." When I tasted it, it was so salt that it quite made one's inflamed gums and palate smart with pain. I noticed some days later that when we did actually get fairly sweet water they could detect no difference between it and the most brackish water.

We had come through hilly and broken country, over low passes and narrow gorges flanking dry river-beds. Then we had entered another immense flat stretch of *lut*, quite level except an occasional solitary hillock breaking the monotonous line of the horizon here and there. From one of these hillocks (4,300 feet) near our camp of November 21st one got quite an interesting panorama all round.

The highest mountain in sight was still the Naiband peak to the south-west of us. A range which seemed about 50 miles off spread to the north-west, and before it—about 20 miles distant from us—a very long low hill range. In an arc from our west to our north were distinguishable several high pointed peaks. A blackish brown, handsomely cut hill stood prominent a mile or so from us in the middle of the plain.

To the north the country was much broken up and low. There was a stream of salt water running from east to west with thick salt deposits on each side of the water edge. To the north-east the hills showed no peculiar characteristics but to the east and south-east could be observed two short hill-ranges, much indented, of broken up and corroded rock, similar to the many we had already found across the desert. To the north and to the south of the hill range which stood to the east of us there were low passes, and behind them again the flat *lut*.

The only thing of real interest in the absolutely bare parts of the desert is the geological formation of the soil and the only amusement is to examine the different beautifully coloured stones that can be picked up, such as handsome agates, bits of malachite, crystals, beautiful marbles, and flints. These

are all the more interesting when one thinks that most of them may have travelled hundreds, some, thousands of miles to get there, either brought by the water when the country was submerged or shifted on and on by the wind. They all bear marks of travel, and even the hardest are polished smooth, the original natural angles of crystals being in many cases actually worn down and quite rounded. Sand-polished pebbles of red jasper, jasper-conglomerates, chalcedony, quartz and agatessent quartz, pink and brown corroded limestone, and calcite were the most frequently met with.

A desert is, in England, always associated with glorious sunsets. Why this should be so is rather difficult to be understood by anybody reasoning in the right way, because the magnificent tints of a sunset are caused by moisture in the air and not by abnormal dryness. All the time that I was in the desert itself I never saw a sunset that really had half the picturesqueness of one of our most modest sunsets in Europe. The sun disappeared very fast, leaving a slightly yellow glow above the horizon, which soon became greenish by blending with the blue sky and then black with night. The twilight was extremely short.

We seldom saw clouds at all in the desert and when we did they were scrubby, little, patchy, angular lumps at enormous heights above the earth's surface. They were generally white or light grey. Occasionally they were of the fish-bone pattern, in long successive ridges, resembling the waves formed on the sand surface when shifted by wind. Soon after the sun had disappeared behind the horizon, these clouds generally changed their colour from white into black and made long lines stretching for great distances across the sky, but adding no beauty to it.

Naturally, the play of shifting lights and shadows upon the desert when the sun shone above the clouds was quite weird, especially when the last formation of clouds referred to cast long bluish shadows slowly moving upon the brilliantly-lighted, whitish tint of the ground. Lower upon the horizon line a curtain of a dirty brownish tint was generally to be seen, due to particles of sand in the air, otherwise in almost all cases that came under my observation the clouds formed well-defined, thin, clean, horizontal lines, or else when very high up patchy small skiffs.

One missed greatly the fat, rolling, globular clouds which are so common to Europe, and which fill the sky with fantastic forms. There is such a thing as getting tired of an everlasting spread of blue sky and the glow of a roasting sun.

A strong westerly gale swept low over the surface of the desert. It was very cold after sunset, but fortunately we had plenty of tamarisk shrubs at hand and camel dung with which to make big fires.

The river bed below our camp was very wide, but the salt stream itself not more than three to four feet across. It eventually lost itself to the north-west in the desert. The camels had been let loose to graze and had a good feed of tamarisk, which they seemed to enjoy much after their long diet on reduced rations of straw and cotton seeds.

We left this camp (4,120 feet) soon after dinner at 7 P.M., and during the night passed several ranges of hills, we travelling all the time on the flat. In the middle of the night the cold was bitter, so cold that I had icicles hanging on my moustache and eyelashes. It was impossible to remain on the camels, and ill as we all felt we had to walk—drag ourselves would be a more suitable expression—to keep ourselves from freezing. On these cold nights we simply longed for the sun to come out. The dark hours seemed interminable. One began slightly to revive when the first glimmering of yellowish light began to tinge the dark blue sky, and the dazzling stars gradually lost their brilliancy and eventually disappeared altogether from the heaven above us.

On the first ray of sun appearing the devout camel men stopped the caravan, spread a small cloth upon the ground, and, having picked up a small stone, placed it in front of them. They duly turned towards sacred Mecca and lifted their arms, then, muttering their prayers, knelt and placed their heads upon the ground, as we have already seen others do, in the usual Mussulman manner. They were most diligent in this respect, and one could not help admiring the intent fervour of their appeals to Allah. At sunset, too, their prayers never failed to be recited—no matter what they were busy doing at the time, all being interrupted for the purpose.

At 5.30 A.M. we arrived at a village called Fedeshk—quite a large place, situated in a flat oblong plain ten miles long and a mile and a half wide, surrounded by low hills on all sides.

On being asked why he had made the camels go so fast on this march, Ali Murat, my camel man, blushingly confessed that in this village was his home and his wife, whom he had not seen for eight months. The anxiety to see his better half, who lived only a stone-throw from where we made camp, did not, however, prevent him looking carefully after his camels, whom he placed first of all in his affection, and smoking Sadek's cigarettes, and a pipe with the other camel men, and waiting till my tea had been brewed to receive his customary six cups. After all this had been gone through, which took the best part of two hours, he disappeared and we did not see him again for the remainder of the morning.

The people of Fedeshk were striking for two reasons, first for being sadly fever-stricken, secondly because they were addicted to opium smoking to a disastrous degree. There were a number of opium dens in the place, and I went to see them. They were dreadful places, in which one would suspect opium smoking was not the only vice indulged in by the natives.

As I entered one of these houses, after a considerable knocking at the door and a great rustling of people running about the small courtyard inside, we were admitted into a room so dark that I at first could discern nothing at all. The pungent, sickening odour of the opium pipes gave one quite a turn, and I lighted up a match to see where I was.

There were men lying about on mats in a semi-stupefied state, and men attendants refilling the pipes—similar to those used in China, a cane holder with earthenware pipe in which tiny pills of opium were inserted and consumed over the flame of a small lamp. Several of the men were in such a torpid state that they mechanically inhaled the opium smoke when the pipes were pressed to their lips, but were hardly cognizant of what went about around them. The opium-den keeper in the meantime did a roaring business, and had a little scale on which he weighed the opium that he served out.

It seemed evident, as I lighted match after match, by certain articles of ladies' attire which in the hurried departure had been left behind in the room, that the usual attendants of the smokers were women, but they had stampeded away on our arrival. One heard them chuckle in the adjoining

rooms, and in their haste, they had left behind a great many pairs of slippers at the entrance of the room.

I had two men conveyed out into the sun where I wanted to examine them. The pupils of their eyes had contracted to a most abnormal extent, even before they were exposed to the sunlight, and seemed to have almost lost the power of expanding and contracting in various lights, and although the eyes were wide opened and staring they did not seem to discern what was placed before them. The eye-ball had a yellowish tinge and the iris was not well-defined but seemed to have undergone discolouration and faded away into the white of the eye. They seemed affected by a kind of temporary atrophy.

The pulse beat extremely slow and faintly; the lips were drawn tight; the hearing so dulled that even loud noises seemed to have no effect upon them. The body was flabby and almost lifeless. It was not possible to obtain an answer to anything one asked them. They had quite a cadaverous appearance, with yellowish, pallid skins, sunken eyes, and teeth showing fully under the drawn lips.

Only now and then, as one watched them, a sigh, followed by a shiver or a grunt, came forth to show us that they were still alive. The fingers and toes displayed some muscular contraction, but not the other joints, which were quite loose. The heart beat so feebly that one could hardly feel it.

They remained spread out in the yard in the positions we had placed them, and were indeed most pitiful objects. The den-keeper told me that these two men were most inveterate smokers, and were at it the whole time until they became quite unconscious.

There were other men in a slightly better condition, but all more or less showing the same symptoms of stupefaction. Those that could mutter words said that it was an irresistible passion that they could never stop. The opium gave them no dreams, they told me, but a delicious feeling of absolute contentment and happiness, which they could never experience when not indulging in this disastrous vice.

On looking upon things impartially, however, one came to the conclusion that, bad as it was, opium-smoking had certainly more peaceful and less disgusting effects upon those unfortunates addicted to it than whiskey or absinthe, or votka drunkenness, for instance.

The entire population of this village was, unfortunately, given to this bad habit, and it was quite pitiable to look upon their haggard, staring faces, and idiotic expression.

Malarial fever is very prevalent at Fedeshk, and some of the corpse-like people affected by it came to my camp for medicine. They were not unlike walking skeletons, with stringy hands and feet and a skin of ghastly yellow colour. They had parched, bloodless ears, curled forward, and sunken cheeks, with deep sunk-in eyes. In the more virulent cases fever was accompanied by rheumatic pains so strong as practically to paralyse the legs and arms, which were reduced to a positive minimum of flesh.

The dwellings of Fedeshk were not impressive. Mud hovels as usual, with domes over the rooms, as everywhere in Persia, only the familiar aperture, instead of being directly in the centre of the dome itself, had a kind of hood over it to screen it from the terrific winds of the West.



FEVER STRICKEN MAN AT FEDESHK.



THE CITADEL, BIRJAND.

It is to be noticed in connection with these winds that to the west of Fedeshk there are rather high mountains, and even winds originally not coming from the west may be turned back or switched in that direction by this chain of mountains.

A large ice store-house is met with at the end of the village, which testifies to the intense cold that can be experienced here in the winter months.

An official residing in the place sent word that he would call upon me, and we made a grand display of all the carpets we possessed to receive him. He arrived with a number of servants, and we had a very pleasant interview, with great consumption of tea. He was extremely civil; inquired whether he could be of any assistance, which was politely declined, and showed intense interest in my firearms and scientific instruments. He and his people were amazed when I told them that their village stood at an elevation of 4,620 ft. above sea level, and explained to them how I had measured the height by means of aneroids and the hypsometrical apparatus.

"These are wonderful!" he said, with a salaam, as he handed me back the instruments which had been eagerly examined by all present. "And," he added, "can you also measure the length of cloth with them?"

A compass, too, he had never set eyes upon; and he at first thought that it was constructed to point towards Mecca! Had not one long ago got accustomed to similar questions often asked one by London people, the innocence of the Persian official might have taken one's breath away, but this was nothing to what happened later.

The Persians showed great curiosity to learn everything in connection with whatever foreign articles I possessed and the respective prices I had paid for them. Then Sadek was closely examined as to the amount of food I ate every day, the salary I paid him, and why I had come across the desert. Was I a Russian or an Englishman? The officer had never seen either, but heard both well spoken of. He had understood that all Englishmen had yellow hair; why had I dark hair? London, he, like most Persians, believed to be a suburb of Bombay, connected with Russia by means of a "machine road,"—a railway!

Why on earth did the *ferenghi* want to know how high mountains were? Did the *ferenghi* know how to find gold in the earth? and so on, were the queries which Sadek had to answer.

With repeated salaams, preceded by a thousand other questions, the official departed; but Sadek, who was much excited, was still bent on a highly scientific conversation to the following effect:—

"Sahib," he said, "you have travelled in many countries, have you not?"

"Yes."

"Sahib, have you been to the country where the sun 'goes to sleep' in a hole in the earth every evening?"

That was Sadek's idea of a sunset! His idea of a sunrise was that a brand-new sun was sent up every day, and this explained how it was that it rose from the opposite side to that on which it had "gone to sleep."

Ali Murat, looking somewhat washed out and absent minded, came back to camp at noon, garbed in a very handsome new coat which his wife had woven and embroidered for him during his absence. He was very proud of it.

We left Fedeshk an hour later, as I was very anxious to reach the city of Birjand the same day if possible. We were now again in fairly inhabited country, and on our hurried march passed a great many villages, large and small, such as Shahzileh, Mazumabad, Tagot, Siaguih, Shamzabad. Further, at Ossenabad, is to be seen a ruined country-house of the Governor of Birjand, then the last two villages of Khelatekhan and Khelatehajih.

Ali Murat seemed rather dazzled on this last march, and was so worn out that he threw himself down upon the ground several times, regardless of spoiling his smart new coat. In a moment he became fast asleep, and it took some rousing to make him get up again. His wife had given him a bag of *keshk*—a kind of cheese, which looked like hardened curdled milk—and of this he partook freely to try and regain his former strength. Keshk cheese was very hard stuff to eat and took a lot of chewing. To prevent it getting too hard it had to be soaked in water every few days.

We had a nasty wind against us, but the way was flat and good; our direction, due east across the long narrow valley of sand, nowhere broader than a couple of miles. To the north were a number of low hills shaped like so many tents, white, grey, and light-red in colour, and also to the south, where there was an additional irregular and somewhat higher rocky mountain.

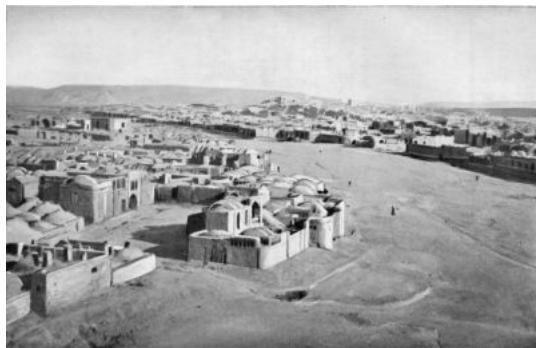
In the evening of November 24th we had crossed the entire Salt Desert and arrived at the large city of Birjand, after Meshed the most important city of Khorassan, the journey having occupied twenty days, which was considered a very fast crossing.

There was a beautiful new caravanserai here, with clean spacious rooms, and with a most attentive and obliging keeper in charge of it.

CHAPTER XI

My caravan disbanded—Birjand—Ruined fortress—The city—Number of houses—Population—The citadel—Artillery—Trade routes—Birjand as a strategical position—A trading centre—No fresh water—The Amir—Indian pilgrims—Birjand carpets—Industries—A pioneer British trader—Imports and exports—How business is transacted—Russian and British goods—Long credit—A picturesque caravanserai—Afghan soldiers—Beluch camel men.

At Birjand, my camels being utterly exhausted, I disbanded my caravan, paid up Ali Murat, and attempted to make up a fresh caravan to proceed to Sistan. This would take two or three days at least, so I employed my time at first by seeing all that there was to be seen in the place, then by receiving various official callers, and last in trying to shake off the fever, which I partially did by very violent but effective methods.



THE CITY OF BIRJAND, showing main street and river bed combined.

We entered Birjand from the west by a wide, dry river bed which formed the main street of the city. A ruined fortress which seemed at one time to have been of great strength, was to be seen on the western extremity of the town on a low hillock. The interior was quite interesting, with several tiers showing how the walls had been manned for defensive purposes.

The general view of Birjand reproduced in the illustration was taken from the fort and gives a better idea of the place than any description. It can be seen that the city is unequally divided by the combined river-bed and main street, the northern portion (to the left of observer in the photograph) having merely an extensive graveyard, a few houses, the large caravanserai at which I had halted, and a row of shops; whereas, on the southern side was the bulk of the houses, two, three and some even four storied, all of a monotonous greyish colour, the buildings being mostly of sun-dried mud bricks. The little windows in sets of threes and fives, with brown wooden shutters, relieved to a certain extent the dullness of the architecture, while a certain relief to the eye was afforded by a dome and another building, both painted white, in marked contrast to the mud walls. Many houses had long verandahs and balconies, on which the women spread their washing.

As the city was built in terraces upon undulating ground and two higher hills, it covered a greater area than it at first appeared to do. The streets were very tortuous and narrow, arched over in some places, forming long dark tunnels, many of the dwellings having rooms over them directly above the roadway.

Making a rough guess, there were, I daresay, some 3,500 to 4,000 houses in Birjand and its suburbs, with a population of not over 30,000 souls. These figures, the natives said, were about correct, but no exact statistics existed.

The higher point of Birjand was at its south-east portion, and at the most extreme south-east point of the town at the bottom of the hill was the high, square, fortress-like enclosure with bastions and a high tower, as represented in the illustration. It was in a dilapidated condition, but was, nevertheless, the only structure in Birjand which had a claim to some picturesqueness. It was the old citadel, inhabited at one time by the Amir. The wall of the citadel facing south had a large window with *musharabeah* woodwork, and a lower building to the side. The adjacent building also had quaint balconies.

A good view of the whole city was obtained from a high, isolated building to the south of the town, in the centre of a large but somewhat untidy fruit garden, an official residence, but now very little used except in cases of emergency to accommodate passing officials or distinguished people.

There were some Persian military officers staying there and they most kindly showed me all that there was to be seen, after having entertained me to some refreshments. They conveyed me inside the citadel where they proudly showed me a battery of six nine-pounder guns of obsolete Austrian manufacture; an eighteen pounder bronze gun and another gun of a somewhat smaller calibre, both of Persian make. They were very carelessly kept, there being apparently only a ragged boy or two to look after them.

The officer told me that the garrison of Birjand consisted of one thousand men, about one hundred of whom were stationed in Birjand itself, the rest being scattered in the villages around and at one or two posts along the Afghan frontier. For the accuracy of this statement, however, I leave the entire responsibility to the officer.

He was much distressed when I inquired whether the soldiers were ever drilled in artillery practice, and he said it could not be done because they had not sufficient ammunition, but they possessed some gunpowder. He agreed with me that artillery would be of little use if there was no one who knew how to use it, and no ammunition at hand!

Birjand being so near the Afghan frontier and having direct roads to Meshed, Herat, Sabzawar, Anardar, Farah, Lash, Sistan, Beluchistan, Bandar Abbas, Kerman, Yezd, Isfahan, and Teheran, is a place of interest from a strategic point of view. In its present condition it could not possibly offer any resistance. The city and citadel can be commanded from many points on the hills to the north-east and east, and the citadel—even allowing that it were strong enough to make a resistance—could be shelled with the greatest ease at close range from the hill on which now stands the ruined fortress west of the city. This point could be reached in perfect safety and would afford absolute cover under fire from the citadel, but with modern artillery even of moderate calibre would prove fatal to the citadel itself.

Birjand is probably the greatest commercial centre in Eastern Persia, its transit trade at various seasons of the year being very extensive from all the routes above-mentioned. Agriculturally, Birjand could not even support its own population, for the water supply is scanty and bad. There is no fresh water obtainable in the city, but brackish water is a little more plentiful. A small spring of good water is, however, to be found some two miles from the city, and there I daily sent a man to bring us a supply.

In war time, therefore, the city could not support nor aid an army, which would fare badly if locked up here. Possibly in some seasons it might supply some camels, horses and mules, but no food.

That the Persians themselves believe this an untenable place in time of war is evident, as this is one of the few large cities in Persia which is not surrounded by a wall.

The Amir, or Governor, does not live in Birjand itself but half a farsakh, or two miles, across the plains to the S.S.E., where he has a handsome residence in a pretty garden. Much to my regret I was too unwell to go and pay my respects to him, although I carried an introduction to him from H.R.H. Zil-es-Sultan, the Shah's brother. He very kindly sent to inquire after my health several times during my stay, and the Karghazar was deputed to come and convey these messages to me.

One cannot speak too highly of the extreme civility of Persian officials if one travels in their country properly accredited and in the right way. If one does not, naturally one only has to blame one's self for the consequences.

One hears a good deal about the advantages of being a Britisher in any country, and one could not help being amused at the natives of Birjand who could not distinguish a European from the blackest Bengalese. They were all *Inglis* to them. Some natives came to announce that a caravan of twenty of my own countrymen had just arrived—which gave me quite a pleasant surprise, although I could hardly credit its truth. On rushing out of my room to greet them, I found myself confronted with a crowd of black-faced, impudent, untidy Indian pilgrims from Bengal, on their way to the Sacred Shrine of Meshed. Most of them were fever-stricken; others, they told me, had died on the way.

These caravans have caused a good deal of friction both with the Persian and Russian authorities, for fear that they should bring plague into Persia and Transcaspia. When one saw these fanatics—religious people can be so dirty—one could not with any fairness blame the authorities for making a fuss and taking stringent measures to protect their own countries and people from probable infection. True, it should be remembered that the journey of 600 miles across the hot Baluchistan desert to Sistan, and the 500 more miles to Meshed, ought to have been a sufficient disinfectant as far as the plague went, but their wretched appearance was decidedly against them.

These pilgrims were a great nuisance; they traded on the fact that they were under British protection; they lived in the most abject fashion, continually haggling and quarrelling with the natives, and decidedly did not add to our popularity in Eastern Persia, to say nothing of the endless trouble and worry they gave to our officials at the Consulates and on the route.

As I have said, the natives do not know the difference between these men and Englishmen, and believe that all British subjects are of the same stamp—by which one cannot quite feel flattered. If these pilgrimages could be gradually restricted and eventually stopped, I think everybody all round would benefit,—even the pilgrims themselves, who might possibly not feel so holy, but whose health would not be impaired by the fearful sufferings they have to endure to gain—and often obtain very prematurely—a claim to a seat in heaven.

The opening up of the Nushki route from Quetta to Sistan and Meshed is responsible for the great influx of pilgrims, who have been attracted by the glowing reports of how easy it is to travel by this route. And so it is very easy, for men accustomed to that particular kind of travelling, like myself or like traders or Government officials, who can travel with all they want, and just as they please, but not for people who have to live from hand to mouth and who are destitute of everything. Those fellows have no idea whatever, when they start, of what they will have to endure on the road.

There is not much local trade in Birjand, but quite a brisk transit trade. The industries are practically confined to carpet-weaving, the carpets being renowned all over Persia for their softness, smooth texture, and colours, which are said never to fade, but the designs upon them are not always very graceful nor the colours always artistically matched. The most curious and durable are the camel-hair ones, but the design, usually with a very large medallion in the centre, does not seem to appeal to European eyes. Even the smallest rugs fetch very large sums. Although called Birjand carpets they are mostly manufactured in some of the villages north of Birjand, especially at Darakush.

Among the shops there are a few silversmiths', some blacksmiths', and some sword and gunsmiths'. The latter manufacture fairly good blades and picturesque matchlocks.

The trade caravanserais in the town are quaint, but to me most interesting of all was the one approached by a sharp incline—a very old one—where an Indian British trader had started business, attempting to further British trade in these regions. This man, by name Umar-al-din Khan, of the firm of Mahammed Ali of Quetta, was really a remarkable fellow. If Russian trade has not yet succeeded in getting a fair hold in Birjand, if British trade has it so far almost altogether its own way, we have only to thank the tact, energy, patience, and talent of this man. The patriotism, enterprise, and hard labour of Umar-al-din and his firm deserve indeed the greatest credit and gratitude.

Birjand is a most interesting point commercially because it will be here that Russian and British competition in Eastern Persia will eventually come into collision.

The main imports of the province of Kain, of which Birjand is the capital, are now English and Russian made merchandise. English goods are so far preferred and realize higher prices, because of their better quality. The articles principally required, and for which in retail the natives are ready to pay well, are ordinary cotton, woollen and silk cloths, household iron, copper, brass vessels, loaf-sugar, glass-ware and crockery, especially of shapes suitable for Persian uses. Indian tea sold very well at first, but the market is greatly overstocked at present and great caution should be exercised by Indian exporters.

Russian sugar, being of a much cheaper quality, is rapidly driving out of the place French and Indian sugars, but the quality of Russian sugar is so bad that of late there has been rather a reaction in favour of Shahjahanpur Rosa (Indian) sugar.

There are in Birjand several native merchants having fair amounts of capital at their disposal, but it appears that the prices which they are willing to pay are so low and the credit required so long, that it is most difficult to do business with them. The retail business is, therefore, more profitable than the wholesale.

The competition in Russian-made cotton cloths and tea is getting very keen and the Russians can sell these things so cheaply that it is not possible for Indian traders to sell at their prices. Also the Russians have learnt to manufacture the stuff exactly as required by the natives.

The glass ware and fancy goods are chiefly sold to the better class people, but no very great profits, especially to passing trading caravans, can be assured on such articles.

The exports consist of wool and skins to Russia, and to Bandar Abbas for India; carpets to Russia, Europe and India; *Barak*, a kind of woollen cloth, to various parts of Persia; opium to China via Bandar Abbas; saffron, caraway seeds, *onaabs*, etc., to India, also via Bandar Abbas, and some English and Russian merchandize to Herat.

Birjand is the commercial pivot, not only of the trade of North-eastern Persia, but also of Western Afghanistan. The commercial supremacy of this town will decide whether we are able in the future to hold our own in the south or not; but once driven back from this centre we may as well—commercially—say good-bye altogether to the northern and central Persian markets; while even the southern markets will be very seriously attacked, as far as goods coming overland are concerned.

Umar-al-din has made a most careful and serious study of the trade of Eastern Persia, and I am certain that if we were to encourage a number of other Indian traders of the same type to establish themselves in Birjand, with possible branches in Meshed, England could make rapid headway against any foreign competition. Being an Asiatic himself, although Umar-al-din has travelled, I believe, in Australia, England, etc., and speaks Hindustani, Persian and English perfectly, he is able to deal with the Persians in a way in which a European would not be so successful. He is on most friendly terms with H. E. Shan-kal-el-Mulk, the Governor, and all the local officials, by whom he is held in much respect and who have at various times made most extensive purchases in his shop to the amount of several thousand tomans' (dollars) worth of British goods.

On one occasion he imported for the Amir and his son a first-class double barrel English gun of the latest type, some revolvers, a bicycle, with a lot of European furniture for which he received immediate payment in cash of 4,000 rupees.

Umar-al-din was the first Indian trader to open a shop in Birjand. By this means he has exercised great influence over the Persian merchants of the place, and has induced the leading ones to trade with India, in preference to Russia, by the Nushki-Quetta route. His good work has been reported to Government by Major Chevenix Trench, then H. B. M. Consul in Sistan, now Consul in Meshed, by Lieutenant-Colonel Temple, Major Benn, and others.

On his arrival in Birjand he acted as Agent for the British Government, and was for ten months in charge of the Consular postal arrangements from Sistan to Meshed, while advising the Government on the best ways of promoting trade in those regions, a work which he did mostly for love and out of loyalty.

He has experimented a great deal, and his experience is that indigo is the article which commands the greatest sale at present, then plain white and indigo dyed cottons of two qualities, a superior kind with shiny surface for the better classes, and one rather inferior with no gloss for the lower people. Fancy articles find no sale.

One of the greatest difficulties that a trader has to contend with is the impossibility of selling anything for ready money, and thus making small but quick profits. Credit has to be given generally for one year, eighteen months, and even as long as two years. Even in the few cases where credit has been allowed for one or two months the greatest difficulty is experienced in obtaining payment for the goods supplied, threats and applications to the Amir being often necessary. Delays are constant, although the money is always paid in the end.

This necessitates keeping the prices very high to compensate for the loss, but by careful handling good profits can be made, if sufficient capital is at hand to keep the concern going.

The caravanserai in which Umar-al-din had hired several rooms which he had turned into a shop was now known by the name of the English Caravanserai, and nearly all the caravans with Indian and Afghan goods halted there. When I went to visit the place there were a number of Afghan soldiers who had conveyed some prisoners, who had escaped into Afghan territory, back from Herat to Birjand. Their rifles, with bayonets fixed, were stacked on the platform outside, and they loitered about, no two soldiers dressed alike. Some had old English military uniforms which they wore over their ample white or blue cotton trousers. These fellows looked very fierce and treacherous, with cruel mouths and unsteady eyes. They wore pointed embroidered peaks inside their turbans, and curly hair flowed upon their shoulders. At a distance they were most picturesque but extremely dirty.

A number of Beluch *mari*, or running camels, were being fed with huge balls of paste which were stuffed down their mouths by their owners. These camel men were the first Beluch I had come across, and although they wore huge white flowing robes, long hair, and pointed turbans not unlike the Afghans, the difference in the features and expression of the faces was quite marked. One could see that they were fighting people, but they had nice, honest faces; they looked straight in one's eyes, and had not the sneakish countenance of their northern neighbours.

CHAPTER XII

A loud explosion—Persian military officers—Dr. Abbas Ali Khan, British Agent in Birjand—His excellent work—Gratefulness of the natives—A quaint letter—The Russian Agent—A Russian temporary score—More British Consulates needed—Visits returned—Altitude and temperature of Birjand—Cossacks and their houses—A bright scene in a graveyard—Departure of Indian pilgrims for Meshed—British Consular postal service—Russian post—Making up a second caravan.

EARLY in the morning of the 26th I was awakened by a fearful explosion that shook the caravanserai and made everything in the room rattle. A few minutes later there was a second report and then a third and fourth, twelve altogether, but these fortunately not quite so loud. Evidently my military friends of the previous day were firing off their artillery.

Shortly after this, in their gaudy uniforms and with a guard of soldiers, the officers came to call upon me at the caravanserai.

"Have you heard the guns being fired?" was their first anxious question. Indeed I had. It appears that to make sure that I should hear them a double charge of powder was placed in the first gun. When it was let off in the very small court of the citadel the concussion had most disastrous effects upon the mud walls all round, as well as upon some of the spectators who were close at hand and who were nearly stunned by the fearful report.

The officers were extremely civil, intelligent and full of humour. Intense astonishment and interest was shown in my repeating rifles. They had never set their eyes upon, nor ever heard that there was such a thing as, a repeating rifle! I was, nevertheless, much struck by their quickness compared with that of the average European, in grasping the mechanism and the way to use the weapons.

They seemed fully to realize that it would be of little practical use to defend Birjand city in case of an attack, because it could be commanded from several excellent positions close at hand to the north-east, north and north-west. Furthermore, the water supply could easily be cut off. They told me, if I remember right, that it was the intention of the Persian Government to strengthen this place and that some more pieces of artillery were expected.

We have in Birjand an Indian doctor, by name Abbas Ali Khan, who acts as British Agent. He is a young fellow of uncommon ability and education, a capital doctor, and a most gentlemanly man, who has had great experience of the world, having travelled with several political missions in various parts of Asia, including the Pekin Syndicate Survey expedition under command of J. W. Purvis, Captain R. E., where not only did he look after the medical necessities of a large party of Europeans, Indians and Chinese, but helped to manage a large transport of mule carts. Captain Purvis testifies to Abbas Ali having performed his professional duties with zeal, and extraneous duties cheerfully, during a journey of some 2,000 miles through China.

It was in April, 1897, that Abbas Ali Khan, at twenty-four hours' notice, accompanied Major Brazier Creagh's Mission to Sistan, when British influence in that part of Persia was non-existent. The Mission returned to India in October of the same year, but Abbas Ali was sent on a second journey to Sistan in charge of a small party from December, 1897, to July, 1898, when he was entrusted with political business which required great discretion and tact.

It is greatly to his credit that he managed—in spite of many difficulties and obstacles—to win the confidence and friendship of officials of a district where all British subjects were regarded with undisguised suspicion and distrust. No better proof of this could be furnished than by reproducing here a literal translation of a quaint document, dated May, 1898, given him, unsolicited, by Mir Masum Sar-tip, Deputy Governor of Sistan, whose official seal it bears:—

"God is acquainted with what is in the minds of men. Beyond doubt and without hesitation it is rightly and justly stated that Military Doctor Mirza Abbas Ali Khan has during the period of his stay in Sistan displayed his personal tact and natural ability. He has treated with great civility and politeness any person who has applied to him for medical attendance and treatment of diseases, and has in no case whatever demanded payment or anything from anybody. He has never hesitated to give gratuitous medical aid with medicines or personal attendance, and all the natives from the highest to the lowest are well satisfied and under great obligation to him. It is hoped that the trouble taken and the pecuniary loss suffered by him will be appreciated by his Government. I have personally greatly benefited by his treatment of my personal diseases and ailments and I trust that he will receive great favour from his Government."

Naturally the medicines are supplied to him by the Government, but it would be becoming if the Government saw its way to reward men of this type for the "soul" which they put into their work, for this it is after all that wins the esteem of the natives more than the actual cost of the medicines. A few grains of quinine, or a few ounces of castor oil have often been the means of obtaining information and advantages for the British Government, which, if properly used, may be worth millions of pounds sterling.

It is to these pioneers that the nation should be grateful, to these people who build sound foundations on which the Empire can spread without fear of collapsing we are indebted far more than to the folks who stop at home and reap with little trouble the credit of the work which has been done by others.

Abbas Ali has gained a most intimate knowledge of the country and people, which gives him enormous influence, and he has been the means of smoothing the way to a considerable extent for the new trade route to Quetta. Major Chevenix Trench, Consul at Meshed, fully testifies to this, and speaks very highly of Abbas Ali's political work, and so does Captain Webb-Ware, in charge of the Nushki-Sistan road, who writes that in his belief the growth of British influence in Sistan and Birjand is due in no small degree to the tact, discretion, and conscientious discharge of duties of Abbas Ali.

Abbas Ali was ordered again to Persia in August, 1899, and has remained there since, stationed at Birjand.

The Russians have established a rival agent to look after their own interests, in the person of Veziroff Gazumbek, a Perso-Russian subject and a Mussulman. This man very politely called upon me in great state, wearing a decoration of the third class which had just been bestowed upon him by the Shah, and accompanied by four Cossacks who were on their way to the Russian Consulate at Sistan to relieve the escort there. He and Abbas Ali were socially and outwardly on excellent terms, but great rivalry necessarily existed in their work.

The Russian had gained a temporary advantage in the eyes of the natives by the honour conferred upon him by the Shah, and it was a pity that an exception to the general rule could not be made and a similar or higher honour obtained for Abbas Ali, whose work certainly deserves—one would think—some consideration. Matters of that sort, although of absolutely no significance in themselves, are of great importance in a country like Persia, where appearances cannot altogether be neglected.

The British Government, one feels, makes a primary and most palpable mistake in not being represented by more English Consular officials, not necessarily sent by the London Foreign Office, but rather of that most excellent type, the military Political servants, such as those who are now found in some few Persian cities. The establishment of a vice-Consulate here at Birjand instead of a

Medical Political Agency would, I think, also, be of very great help at the present moment and would increase British prestige there.

The afternoon of that day was spent in returning the visits of Abbas Ali Khan, the Russian Agent, and the Karghazar. Everywhere I met with extreme civility. Both the British and the Russian Agent lived in nice houses, handsomely carpeted and furnished, only Abbas Ali's place had a more business-like appearance than that of the Russian because of the many books, the red cross trunks of medicine and surgical instruments and folding camp furniture. The house of the Russian was practically in Persian style, with handsome carpets and cushions, but with hardly any European chairs or furniture.

Birjand is very high up, 5,310 ft. above sea level, and we did not feel any too warm. The thermometer was seldom more than 60° in the shade during the day, and from 40° to 50° at night.

In the evenings the four Cossacks of the Sistan Consular escort, who had been detained here, and occupied one of the rooms of the caravanserai, sat out in the open singing with melodious voices in a chorus the weird songs of their country. These men were really wonderful. They had come down from Turkestan, a journey of close upon five hundred miles, riding their own horses, with only a few roubles in their pockets, and little more than the clothing they wore, their rifles, and bandoliers of cartridges. The affection for their horses was quite touching, and it was fully reciprocated by the animals. One or two of the men slept by the horses so that no one should steal them, and the animals were constantly and tenderly looked after.

There was a bright scene in the graveyard behind the caravanserai, the day that all the women went to visit the graves and to lay offerings of food, rice and dried fruit upon the tombs of their dead. Little conical white tents were pitched by hawkers, and dozens of women in their white chudders prowled about like so many ghosts, or else squatted down in rows beside or upon the graves. The doleful voices of blind beggars sang mournful tunes, and cripples of all kinds howled for charity.

A Persian crowd is always almost colourless, and hardly relieved by an occasional touch of green in the men's kamarbands or a bright spot of vermillion in the children's clothes. The illustration representing the scene, shows on the left-hand side of the observer, the ruined fortress at the western end of the city of Birjand, and the near range of hills to the north-west which, as I mentioned, would afford most excellent positions for artillery for commanding Birjand. The domed building in the centre of the photograph is one of the dead-houses adjoining every cemetery in Persia, to which the bodies are conveyed and prepared previous to interment.

The Persian Government have a Belgian Customs official in Birjand, but he generally spends much of his time travelling along the Afghan frontier. He had left Birjand when I arrived.



WOMEN VISITING GRAVES OF RELATIVES, BIRJAND. (Ruined Fort can be observed on Hill.)

With more pity than regret I watched at the caravanserai the departure of the Indian pilgrims for the Shrine at Meshed. They had obtained a number of donkeys and mules, and were having endless rows with the natives about payment. Eventually, however, the caravanserai court having been a pandemonium for several hours, all was settled, their rags were packed in bundles upon the saddles, and the skeleton-like pilgrims, shivering with fever, were shoved upon the top of the loads. There was more fanaticism than life left in them.

The four Cossacks, also, who were at the caravanserai received orders to leave at once for their post at Sistan, and gaily departed in charge of the British Consular courier who was to show them the way.

This courier travels from Meshed to Sistan with relays of two horses each, in connection with the Quetta-Sistan postal service. The service is worked entirely by the Consuls and by the Agent at Birjand, and is remarkably good and punctual considering the difficulties encountered. There is also a Persian postal service of some sort, but unfortunate is the person who rashly entrusts letters to it. Even the Persian officials themselves prefer to use the English post. The Russians have established a similar service from their frontier to Sistan, but it does not run so frequently.

The making up a second caravan in a hurry was no easy matter, but eventually I was able to persuade one of the men who had accompanied me across the Salt Desert to procure fresh camels and convey me there. This he did, and after a halt of three days we were on the road again to cross our third desert between Birjand and Sistan, a distance of some 210 miles.

CHAPTER XIII

Departure from Birjand—A cloud like a skeleton hand—A downpour—The village of Muht—A ruined fortress—A beautiful sunset—A pass—Besieged by native callers—Two towers at Golandeh—Strayed—Curious pits—Sahlabad—The impression of a foreign bed—Fujima's twin.

A LARGE and most respectful crowd collected in and out of the caravanserai to watch the departure of my caravan at five o'clock in the evening on November 27th. We were soon out of Birjand and, steering a south-easterly course, passed one or two large mud enclosures with a few fruit-trees, but otherwise there was hardly any vegetation visible anywhere—even in the immediate neighbourhood of Birjand. Everything was as barren as barren could be.

Overhead the sky after sunset was most peculiarly marked by a weird, black, skeleton-like hand of perfect but gigantic proportions, spreading its long bony fingers over us. As night came on, it grew very cold and the skeleton hand of mist compressed itself into a nasty black cloud. A few minutes later a regular downpour drenched us to the skin and the camels experienced great difficulty in walking on the slippery mud.

This was the first rain we had seen, or rather felt, since leaving Teheran. Our long-unused macintoshes had been applied to such usages as wrapping up cases of photographic plates and enveloping notebooks, so that we could not very well get at them, now that we needed them, without taking all the loads down. So we went on until our clothes were perfectly saturated, when at least we had the satisfaction of knowing that we could not get wetter than we were.

The rain came down in bucketfuls for over an hour, then luckily stopped, and in a few moments, with a howling wind rising, the sky was clear again and the myriads of stars shone bright like so many diamonds. The cutting wind and our wet clothes made this march rather a chilly one, although one felt some relief at the sensation of moisture after so many months of intense dryness.

There was nothing whatever to see on any side, and I have never thanked my stars so much as when, after marching thirteen hours, we reached the village of Muht, a place of fair size in a picturesque little valley with nice hills on all sides.

To the north-east of the village was an interesting demolished fortress standing on a low hill. It had a very deep well in the centre within its walls, which were of stone, with twelve turrets round it. At the foot of the hill was a *haoz*, or water tank, now dry, which the natives said was very ancient and which they attributed to the Hindoos. To the west a lake was said to exist called Kiemarakalah, by the side of a mountain not unlike a Swiss roof in shape; while to the north-east of the fortress were rugged rocks and low sand-hills. The elevation of this village was 6,520 feet.

We left Muht at noon of the same day and passed a small village on our way, then we gradually ascended to a pass 7,050 feet high, on the other side of which was a plain—green not from vegetation, but because the clayish soil was of that colour—with hills to the east and west.

It was hardly possible to imagine more dreary, desolate scenery than that through which we were going. There was not a living soul beyond ourselves anywhere in sight. The camels, which had caught cold in the shower of the previous night, had to be given a rest, and we halted again after a five hours' march. The cold was intense. Whether owing to the moisture in the atmosphere, or to some other cause, we had on the evening of the 28th a really beautiful sunset. The sky was dazzling with brilliant gold and vermilion tints.

At midnight we were again under way, first across flat, then over undulating country, after which we got among the mountains and between precipitous gorges. This was quite a welcome change, but not for the camels, the way being somewhat rough and stony.

We had some little difficulty in going up the steep pass, 7,200 feet, the camels panting terribly. We suffered from the cold and the heavy dew which positively drenched men, camels, and baggage. It was quite as bad as having been out in the rain, we were so soaked. I, unfortunately, became ill again, fever attacking me afresh more fiercely than ever; Sadek, too, and Abbas Ali, the camel man, were also taken very sick.

On the other side of the pass we went through a steep, narrow, and most fantastically picturesque defile of rocks, and eventually passed the little hamlet of Golandeh which boasts of no less than half-a-dozen mud huts and as many fruit trees.

We had descended to precisely the altitude of Muht, or 6,520 feet. From this village the Sistan track descends for a few hundred yards and then proceeds in a south by south-east direction over a flat stretch with some hills. A very high mountain could be seen to the south by south-west and another quite pointed to the south by south-east (at 170° b.m.). To the east-south-east some twenty miles from Muht, was another tiny hamlet built against the foot of the mountain along which we had come. A large plain opened before us to the south-west.

At Golandeh we were besieged by natives applying for medicine, as there seemed to be hardly a soul in the place who was not affected by some complaint or other. Affections of the eyes were most common. Those who wanted no medicine begged for money or lumps of sugar,—which latter there is apparently some difficulty in obtaining here and for which they seemed to have a perfect craving. Men, women, and children implored to be given some.

There were two towers at Golandeh, the lower one quadrangular in shape and two-storied. The upper floor had recesses in all the rooms for storing grain and provisions.

We left camp at 5.45 P.M. and all went well until about ten o'clock, when Sadek took it into his head that we were travelling in the wrong direction and proceeded to put us right, I being fast asleep on my camel. The camel man, having never been on this route, did not know the way and depended a great deal on the bearings I gave him daily by my compass. When I awoke we had got sadly mixed up among big boulders and sharp broken-up rocks, from which the camels had the greatest difficulty in extricating themselves, and we wasted a good deal of time in helping the animals to get on to better ground as they continually stumbled and fell among the loose stones. The loads got undone several times and we were all three so ill that we had not the strength to tie them up again properly on the saddles.

In the course of time I put the party on the right track again, and for more than one hour we went up and down steep but not high passes, through defiles, and across a small stream. We were following the dry river-bed among rocks in a gorge, and we arrived at a spot where there was a rock barrier several feet high beneath us, which made it impossible for camels to get down; so Abbas Ali was despatched to try and find an easier way while Sadek and I were left to freeze in a cutting south-west wind.

The camel man returned and led the camels back a long distance until we came to a faint track along a streamlet, which we tried to follow, but it went along such precipitous places that we had to abandon it for fear the camels, who could not get a proper foot-hold, might come to grief. In Birjand I had only succeeded in obtaining just sufficient animals to carry my loads, Sadek, and myself, and so was not very anxious to run the risk of losing any and becoming stranded in such an inhospitable place.

We eventually contrived to take the camels down to the flat without any serious mishaps, and wandered and wandered about and went over another pass—my compass being all we had to go by.

Sadek, whose high fever had affected his vision, now swore that we were going back towards Birjand instead of going on, and said he was certain my compass was wrong; but I paid no heed to his remarks, and by carefully steering our course with the compass—which involved a reckless waste of matches owing to the high wind—I eventually got the party into the open, upon a wide plain of sand and gravel. Here, having shown Abbas Ali the right bearings to follow, I got upon my camel, again wrapped myself well in my blankets and went fast asleep.

So unfortunately did Abbas Ali, who was tired out after his exertions among the rocks, and at 3 A.M. I woke up to find the camels going as and where they pleased, and the camel man, buried under his thick felt coat, snoring so soundly upon his camel that it took a good deal of shouting to wake him up. I had no idea where we had drifted while I had been asleep, and the night being an unusually dark one we could not well see what was ahead of us, so we decided to halt until sunrise.



IN THE DESERT. (Tamarisks in the Foreground.)

When it grew light in the morning I was much interested in some curious circular and quadrangular pits only a few yards from where we had stopped, which were used as shelters for men and sheep but were now deserted. These pits were from four to six feet deep below the level of the ground, and from ten to thirty feet in diameter (when circular), a section being partitioned for sheep by a fence of thick but soft cane that grows in the neighbourhood of water. In the part reserved for human beings there was a circular fireplace of stones, and some holes in the earth at the sides for storing foodstuff. The lower portion of the inside wall all round the pit was of beaten earth up to a height of two feet, above which a wall of stones carefully fitted one upon the other was constructed from two to four feet high, up to the level of the earth. Here a projecting screen of cane was erected all round at an angle converging towards the centre of the pit, for the double purpose of preventing the sheep escaping, and of sheltering the inmates during the fearful sand and windstorms that sweep with great force along the earth's surface. The entrance was cut on one side with an incline to afford easy access to the pit.

At this particular place there were altogether some fifteen of these pits, and in one of them we lighted a big fire with some shrubs we collected, and rested for some three hours to give Sadek time to cook my breakfast.

The difference in the temperature between the interior of these pits and the open ground was extraordinary. They were comfortably warm, even when it was unpleasantly cold as one peeped out of them.

While Sadek was busy with his culinary work, and the camel man chewed dried pieces of bread and *keshk* cheese, I proceeded to find our right way. It lay about one mile to the east of the pits.

On resuming our march, five farsakhs (twenty miles) from Golandeh, we reached Sahlabad, an unimportant village. South there was to be seen an extensive white salt deposit, which at first had all the appearance of a large lake, and a stream of salt water flowed across the large valley and through the village from north-east to south-west.

To the east there was a long range of multi-coloured mountains, all with high sand accumulations at their base; greys in several beautiful tones, were prevalent, and there were stretches of black, brown, burnt sienna, and a pale cadmium yellow. To the north-west, whence we had come, low hills were visible, and to the south-west fairly high ones.

Sahlabad was a depressing place. The natives were in abject poverty and their habitations dismal, to say the least. The huts were partly underground, and the top aperture of the domed roof was screened by a hood with an opening to the north-east. No firewood was obtainable at this place, and the only water the natives had to drink was the salt water from the stream. At Sahlabad we had descended to an elevation of 5,050 ft., which made a considerable change in the temperature.

We encountered here a large caravan in charge of Beluch drivers, and among other curious articles one of the camels carried a beautiful new enamelled iron bedstead. The reader may suppose that, after several months of sleeping on the ground, I wished it had been mine,—but I did not. On the contrary, I was particularly struck on that occasion by what an elaborate, clumsy, useless thing it seemed, although, as bedsteads go, it was one of the best!

To the south stood a high mountain, very closely resembling in shape the world-renowned Fujiama of Japan, only this one had a somewhat wider angle. Beyond the white expanse of salt to the south-east there was low, flatish country, but to the west, north-west and south-west, rose fairly high hills.

The valley itself in which we were was some two and a half miles broad, and covered with grey sand.

In the centre of the village in the neighbourhood of which we camped was a tumbled-down circular tower, and an octangular tower in two tiers, also partly ruined. The latter stood at the corner of an enclosure which at one time must have been the beginning of the village wall.

CHAPTER XIV

Suspicious characters—A trap—Held up—No water—The haunt of robbers—Fierce daily winds—Volcanic formation—A crater—Wall-like barriers—A salt stream—A caravan from Quetta.

We remained at Sahlabad the whole afternoon, and we were visited in camp by a number of suspicious-looking people, who were most inquisitive to know what I possessed and how much money I carried, and other such pertinent questions which they put to Sadek and my camel man. Also a peculiar lot of fellows, with very ugly countenances and armed to their teeth, passed by. They were mounted on fine horses with gaudy saddles, and on coming suddenly and unexpectedly upon us seemed quite upset. Instead of salaaming us, as had been usual with the few well-to-do people we had so far met, they whipped their horses and galloped away.

Sadek said they must be Sawars—mounted soldiers. Abbas Ali said they were robbers from Afghanistan. We shall see later what they were.

At 6.30 P.M. we left—it was quite dark—and we had gone but two miles when a distant voice called upon us to stop. By his speech the stranger seemed very excited when he reached us, and said we must keep the track, to the left and not follow the one to the right where two trails branched off. We could not see his face, for he kept some twenty or thirty yards off, and besides, his face was wrapped all round in the tail of his turban. We professed to be thankful for the information, but continued on the track to the right, which seemed greatly to disturb him—at least, judging by the number of times he entreated us to follow his advice.

Both Sadek and Abbas Ali corroborated my conviction that this was a trap laid for us. The man, on seeing us go a different way from the one he advised us, ran away, and presently we heard some shrill whistles which were no doubt signals to his companions.

We had gone but another mile when suddenly a figure with a gun in hand sprang before us and seized the camel man by the chest.

"Whose caravan is this?" he shouted.

"It is the *ferenghi's*," hastily replied the camel man.

There was a short pause in the conversation when our interlocutor, looking up at my camel which had got close upon him, perceived himself covered by my rifle.

Sadek had leapt off his camel as quick as lightning and shoved the muzzle of his Winchester in the man's face. As the stranger's demeanour was most peculiar and his answers incoherent as well as flippant, Sadek first disarmed his adversary, then turned his own rifle the round way about and gave the man a good pounding for his impertinence in holding up my camel man. We heard a number of voices of people hidden all around. When the fellow managed to effect an escape he gave an alarm signal, and we saw a lot of black figures jump up and stampede for their lives.

This furnished a little variation in our dreary night marches, and we proceeded briskly, Sadek, Abbas Ali and I being most grateful to our unknown friends for the amusement they had provided us.

Some three miles further we came upon several caravans that had halted and were hiding, for they were aware of robbers being about—they had seen fresh tracks of their horses during the day and were in fear of being attacked. At first when we appeared on the scene they mistook us for brigands, and as we discovered them hidden we also mistook them for robbers, so that the beginning of our interview did not lack in humour.

We had a hearty laugh over it all when their identity and ours were established, and after a few minutes' halt we continued our journey on soft sand, rather undulating, with frequent depressions in places. We travelled the whole night of December 1st, passing to the right of the salt deposits—which looked like a big stretch of country covered with snow and threw out a certain luminosity, possibly because the salt crystals reflected and condensed what light there was from the stars. As the hours of the night went by we gradually left the salt stretch behind us to the north, and proceeded on the flat for some distance.

In the morning we passed a small village right up on the mountain side, one mile and a half to the west of our course. We then entered a dry river-bed between high sand hills, and having marched nineteen hours continuously camels and men were rather in need of a rest.

At one P.M. on December 1st we pitched our camp in the middle of the river-bed—80 feet broad here—the only place where we could get a draught of air—but the heat was suffocating, the thermometer registering 112°—the altitude being 5,010 feet.

As we expected to find water of some kind we had omitted to fill up the skins and load the camels unnecessarily, but, unluckily, there was no water anywhere at hand. Abbas Ali was sent to the village we had passed—now some four miles back—to get some, but being too tired to carry the heavy skin down to us again he entrusted it to a boy, giving him full directions where our camp was. The boy did not find where we were, and in the meantime Sadek and I had our throats parched with thirst. Abbas Ali returned at seven o'clock and had to be despatched back to the village in search of the lost boy and the water skin. It was ten o'clock when he returned, and after twenty-eight hours of dryness we had our first drink of water. It was brackish but it tasted delicious.

We were compelled to remain here for the night. Several caravans passed through going north, and also a lot of suspicious people, whose manner was so peculiar that we were compelled to sit up the

greater part of the night and keep watch on my property. Some of the caravan men who had gone through had warned us that we had encamped in a regular nest of robbers, and that three men had been robbed and murdered at this spot only a few days before.

The high sand hills afford excellent hiding places for these gentry. It appears that the men on horseback whom we had seen at Sahlabad, and who had bolted on coming suddenly upon us, were the high chief of the robber band and some of his confederates,—very likely on their way to Birjand to dispose of booty. Being so near the Afghan border these fellows enjoy practical safety by merely going from one country into the other to suit their plans and to evade search parties occasionally sent out for their capture.

We had come forty miles from Sahlabad, and Abbas Ali brought us the news from the village that we should find no water on our course for fifteen miles more and no habitations for forty-eight more miles. Unluckily, we had hardly enough provisions to last one day, and we perceived a fair prospect before us of having to go one day without food, when Abbas Ali was despatched for a third time for another eight miles' walk to the village and back to see what he could get in the way of edibles.

He returned, riding a cow, in company with another man, and a third fellow on a mule carrying a fat sheep. The latter was there and then purchased and killed, and we had a copious breakfast before starting along the winding dry bed of the river at 11.30 A.M. on December 2nd.

Before us to the south by south-west (190° b.m.) was a lofty flat-topped mountain which appeared about fifteen miles off, and directly in front of our course was also another and more extensive long, flat-topped mountain stretching from north-east to south-west, three miles off, with precipitous sides towards the north-west and north. The sides were padded with sand accumulations which reached almost to the summit of the lower portions of the mountain barrier. To the south-west, approximately twenty miles off, stood a high range.

West and north-westerly winds blew every day in a fierce manner, usually from sunset till about ten or eleven o'clock the following morning, at which hour they somewhat abated. They are, no doubt, due to the great jumps in the temperature at sunset and sunrise. On December 1st, for instance, from 112° in the sun during the day the thermometer dropped to 20° at night, or 12° of frost. On December 2nd at noon it was up again as high as 114° .

We traversed a plain twelve miles long and at its south-east course, where the mountain ranges met, there occurred a curious spectacle—evidently of volcanic formation. On the top of the black hills of gravel and sand lying in a confused mass, as if left so by an upheaval, rose a pinnacle of bright yellow and red stone, with patches of reddish earth and of a dissimilar texture to the underlying surface of the hill. There seemed little doubt that both the rocky pinnacle and the red earth had been thrown there by some force—and under the projecting rocks and masses of soft earth one could, in fact, find a different formation altogether, bearing the same characteristics as the remainder of the hill surface.

This was on the northern slope of that hill. As the track turned here due east, and rounded, as it were, this curious mount, we found in reality on the other side a large, crater-like basin with lips of confused masses of earth both vermillion and of vivid burnt sienna colour, as well as most peculiar mud-heaps in a spiral formation all round the crater, looking as if worn into that shape by some boiling liquid substance. To the south-east, on the very top of a hill of older formation, was perched at a dangerous angle another great yellow boulder like the one we had seen on the north side of the crater. For a diameter of several hundred yards the earth was much disturbed.

One mile further south-east, in traversing a basin a mile broad, it was impossible not to notice a curious range of hills with some strange enormous baked boulders—(they had evidently been exposed to terrific heat)—standing upright or at different angles to the east side of the hills, stuck partly in the sand and salt with which the ground was here covered.

Irregular and unsystematic heaps of rock, on which sand had accumulated up to a certain height, were to be seen to the south, and huge boulders of rich colour lay scattered here and there; whereas near the mountains which enclosed the basin both to south and east there were thousands of little hillocks of rock and sand in the most disconnected order.

As we went on, two perpendicular flat-topped barriers were before us to the east—like gigantic walls—one somewhat higher than the other, and of a picturesque dark burnt sienna colour in horizontal strata.

The whole country about here seemed to have been much deranged at different periods. We passed hillocks in vertical strata of slate-like brittle stone, in long quadrangular prisms, but evidently these strata had solidified in a horizontal position and had been turned over by a sudden commotion of the earth. This conclusion was strengthened by the fact that the same formation in a horizontal position was noticeable all along, the strata in one or two places showing strange distortions, with actual bends, continuing in curves not unlike the letter S. In the dry river bed there were large rocks cut into the shape of tables on a single pillar stand, but these were, of course, made by the erosion of water, and at a subsequent date.

Further on we found a tiny stream of salt water in the picturesque gorge—as weird and puzzling a bit of scenery as can be found in Persia, if one carefully examined each hill, each rock, and tried to speculate on their formation.

From the rocks—a hundred feet or so above the salt stream,—we came to a spring—if one could call it by that name—of delicious sweet water. The water dripped at the rate of about a tumbler-full an hour, but a gallon or two had collected in a pool directly under the rock, with a refreshing border of green grass round it. We gladly and carefully transferred the liquid into one of the skins by means of a cup judiciously handled so as not to take up the deep sediment of mud in the shallow pool.

We came across a very large caravan from Quetta in charge of some Beluch drivers, and—after one's experience of how things are packed by Persian caravans—one was greatly struck by the neat wooden packing boxes, duly marked and numbered. I inquired whose caravan it was, and the Beluch said it belonged to two English Sahibs who were ten miles behind, and were expected to catch it up during the night. The names of the two sahibs were so mispronounced by the Beluch that I could not, to save my life, understand what they were.

We halted in the gorge at four o'clock, having come only sixteen miles from my last camp. Altitude, 4,440 feet.

CHAPTER XV

Sadek's wastefulness—Meeting two enterprising English traders—Another circular crater—Wind and electricity in the air—Their effects—A fortress—Soldiers and brigandage—Zemahlabad—Windmills—Bandan—Ancient tombs—Picturesque women—Lost our way—A welcome messenger—Nasirabad—"Ruski" or "Inglis"—Several miles of villages and houses—English maps and foreign names—Greeted by Major Benn.

We intended continuing our journey after dinner. This camp being well screened on all sides, Sadek gave way to his ambition to have the camp lighted up by a number of candles, with which he was always most wasteful. He had two candles alight where he was doing his cooking, I had two more to do my writing by, Abbas Ali had also two to do nothing by. Luckily, there was not a breath of wind to disturb the illumination.

Towards nine o'clock we heard noises of camels' and horses' hoofs stumbling against the rocks down the gorge, and my ears caught the welcome sound of English voices.

"What can all those lights be?" said one.

"They look like candles," replied the other.

"They *are* candles!" I intervened. "Will you not get off your horses and have some dinner with me by the light of them?"

"Who in the world is that?" queried one of the riders of the other, evidently taken aback at being addressed in English in such a queer place and at such a time of the night.

"My name is Henry Savage Landor."

"What? not Tibet Landor? Our names are Clemenson and Marsh—but what in the world are you doing here? Have you not some companions?"

"Yes, I have. Here they are: three Persian kittens!"

As Mr. Clemenson had some big dogs with him, the moment the cats were let out of the box to be introduced there was a chase, but the kittens climbed in due haste up the side of the cliff and left the disappointed dogs below to bark. On this high point of vantage they squatted down and watched our proceedings below with the greatest interest.

It was a real delight to meet countrymen of one's own after so many weeks of loneliness. These two enterprising English traders had brought over a very large caravan from Quetta, and were on their way to Meshed, having done good business in Sistan. They had with them every possible article they could think of, from tea to phonographs, lamps, razors, music boxes, magic lanterns, bedsteads, cottons, silks, cloths, chairs, glass-ware, clocks, watches, and I do not know what else. I believe that it was the largest caravan of that kind that had ever come over to Persia from Beluchistan.

After a pleasant interview of an hour or so, and what humble refreshments I could offer, they were compelled to continue their journey to the north. The kittens, having anxiously watched the departure of Mr. Clemenson's dogs, leapt back from rock to rock and down on to my carpet, all three sitting as usual in a row in front of my plate while I was having my dinner, with their greedy eyes on the meat, and occasionally also one of their paws.

We did not make a start till 2.30 A.M., when there was moonlight, as the way was very bad among stones and boulders. For a short distance we travelled between high cliffs and boulders, then between low hills much further apart. On our left we came to a most peculiar formation of rock which seemed almost like a castle, and from this point we got into a long and wide plain, most uninteresting and swarming with a troublesome kind of small fly.

A rugged mountain to the north, being higher and more vividly coloured than the rest, attracted the eye, as one tried hard to find something to admire in the scenery; and to the south-west we saw the back view of the flat-topped plateau we had skirted the day before. To the S.S.W. lay another flat-topped high mountain like the section of a cone which we had noticed on our previous march.

We were now marching due east, and after some sixteen miles' journey from our last camp we again entered a hilly portion of country. We made a halt of three hours, from 8 A.M. to 11 A.M., to have our breakfast. Then we entered the hills by one of the usual dry channels formed by the water washing down with great force in rainy weather from the hillsides. After half a mile we emerged again into another plain, three miles long and about equally wide, with very broken, low rocky mountains to the east, and low sand hills to the south. To the south-east, in the direction we were following, stood a massive-looking mountain, which, however, possessed no very beautiful lines.

More interesting and quaint was the circular crater in a conical mountain to the north-east of the long dreary plain we were now traversing. The mouth of this large crater was much lower on the south-west side than on the north-east, thus exposing to the full view of the traveller the entire opening in the centre of the mountain, reddish-brown in colour.

Having gone some twelve miles more, we stopped, at four in the afternoon, in a bitterly penetrating cold wind, which seemed to have a most uncomfortable effect upon one's nervous system. Whether it was that the intense dryness caused an excess of electricity, or what, I do not know, but one ached all over in a frightful manner, and experienced the same tendon-contracting feeling as when exposed to an electric current.

One farsakh before reaching camp we had passed the camping ground of Angiloh, where a tiny drip of fresh water exists. We happily found here a quantity of wood, abandoned by the Clemenson caravan, which we put on our camels and carried further down into the plain, where, having found a

depression in the ground affording some shelter from the fearful wind, we halted to wait until the moon rose.

My fever seized me violently on that night, and I experienced intense pain in my spine, my legs and arms, more especially in places where I had received wounds on previous journeys.

We left again in the middle of the night at 3 A.M., and a great effort it was, too, to get out of one's warm blankets and scramble on the camel, aching as I was all over, and with the indescribable exhaustion that fever of the desert brings on. Luckily, with the rising of the moon, the wind had somewhat abated, but the electricity in the air was as unpleasant as it was extraordinary. One was absolutely saturated with it, and discharged sparks from one's finger-tips when one touched anything that was a good conductor.

In the morning at the foot of the mountains we passed a large fortress where, they told me, twenty soldiers had been stationed the previous year in order to suppress brigandage that had been rampant here. Both Afghan and Sistan robbers seemed to be most partial to this spot, probably because it is that at which all the caravans from Birjand and Meshed converge on their way to Sistan.

We actually perceived some trees in the distance, and at last we arrived at Zemahlabad, a quadrangular fort, with two such peculiar structures at the sides that I really could not at first guess what they were. Sadek, called upon to explain, was no wiser, and we had to find a solution to our speculation from one of the local authorities. They were windmills, and most ingenious and simple they were, too, when once one had grasped the mechanism of them. Only in their case the large opening to the east and west, to let in and out the wind, had been screened with elaborate wood-work, and it was not easy to understand the principle of the device until one visited the interior. We shall come later in our journey to some quite superior ones, which I will endeavour to describe.

There were many palm trees at this place and some few patches of vegetation. A great many mat-sheds had been erected, and hundreds of cows were to be seen; the land, being marshy, provided fair pasturages. (Altitude 2,700 ft.)

To the extreme east of the long valley we had traversed the Bandan mountains, converged into an acute angle with those on the opposite side of the valley, and on the north-east side we had again the same formation of rock in horizontal strata with some contortions at its western end. A salt stream flowed here through a narrow gorge, between the picturesque, wall-like barrier to the north and the handsome hills to the south-west. A great number of palm trees gave quite a tropical appearance to this gorge, although the whitish sand mixed with salt impressed one like dirty snow, and the sky was also whitish and promising real snow. It was none too hot—thermometer 34°.

Just before reaching Bandan—also called Darban by some natives (2,870 ft.)—we noticed on the precipitous slopes of the mountain to the south-west several buildings in ruins, said to be ancient tombs. They were domed. At the foot of the mountain were the remains of a village.

Bandan consisted of a quadrangular walled village with five high towers and two more partly collapsed. The lower part of the village wall—a regular fortress—was of stone and mud, the upper portion of sun-dried mud bricks. It appeared to have been built at different epochs, the south-west half especially seeming more modern than the north-east portion. Holes about three feet above the ground in the wall served the purpose of windows to the houses adjoining the wall inside the castle, and a stone of suitable size shoved into the aperture was the shutter.

The village wall had two entrances on the south-east side, where outside the wall could be seen fifteen small domed ovens, of the usual Persian type, for baking bread, the paste of which is plastered on the inside of the dome when sufficiently heated.

The highest tower was on the south-west side, and all of these structures had a foundation of stone, but the remainder was of mud.

We saw here a string of picturesque women. They were carrying loads of wood and heavy bags of wheat on their heads. On perceiving me unexpectedly they tried to run away, and did so, but not before I had got the good snapshot of them here reproduced. It can be seen by this photograph what long steps these women took, and how those that carried heavier loads swung their arms about to diminish the effort and balance themselves. They walked with a good deal of spring in their knees.

These women had much stronger features than the Persian generally have, and resembled—in fact, were practically—Afghan women. One or two only had the Hindoo type, with large, soft, drooping eyes, large hook noses, and over-developed lips, with small receding chins. The younger ones were strikingly handsome.

On our last march we had come from north to south, but now, after a short halt, we went on towards the south-east on what we thought would be our last two marches before reaching Sher-i-Nasrya, the capital city of Sistan, only some sixty miles off. Soon after leaving Bandan we found ourselves in an open plain with gradually vanishing mountains to the south-west. To the north-east the wall-like barrier, about one mile from Bandan, suddenly ceased in a gentle slope. East and E.S.E., now that the plain became of immense breadth, one could see two isolated low hill ranges, barring which, in the arc of a circle between north-east and south, we had nothing before us except a flat, dreary stretch of sand and stones meeting the sky on the horizon line.

On getting nearer the Hamun-i-Halmund (swamp), formed by the Halmund river and others losing themselves into the sand and flooding part of that region, the whole country was covered with high reeds and small water channels, which constantly made us deviate from our course. In the middle of the night we got so mixed up that we were unable to go on. It is most dangerous to make camels get into water channels, especially if muddy, without being certain of their depth. The brutes, if sinking, are seized with panic and collapse, or, in trying to get out quickly, often slip sideways and get split in two, which necessitates their being killed.

In the morning we passed two Cossacks from the Sistan Consulate escort, who, having been relieved, were now on their way back to Russia. They gave us a hearty greeting, and shortly after a messenger from the British Consul in Sistan handed me a letter, a most kind invitation from Major Benn to go and stay with him at the Consulate.

Towards noon we reached Nasirabad (altitude 2,050 ft.), a very old village founded by one Malik Nasir Khan Kayani—the *Kayani*, as is well known, being the former rulers of Sistan, and every big

Kayani being called "Malik." We stopped for a couple of hours for lunch, the principal house in the village being vacated by the courteous inmates for my use. The arrival of a *ferenghi* excited considerable attention, and numerous and anxious inquiries were made whether I was a "Ruski" or "Inglis." On learning that I was "Inglis," they expressed their unsolicited conviction that all Inglis were good people and Ruski all bad, and no doubt if I had been a Ruski the reverse conviction would have been expressed with similar eagerness.

The natives were polite, but extremely noisy, shouting and yelling at the top of their voices when they spoke. The men wore large white turbans over their white skull caps, long blue shirts, opened and buttoned on the left side, reaching to below their knees, and the enormous Afghan trousers.

From Nasirabad we came across a long uninterrupted row of ruined villages and towns, stretching in a line for some eight miles from north to south. The most northern one had the appearance of a fortress with a very high wall, still in fair preservation, and several more of these fortresses were to be seen along the line of houses, the majority of dwellings being outside these forts. The domed houses—some of which were in perfect preservation—showed the identical architecture and characteristics of Persian houses of to-day.

We were benighted again. Curiously enough, even within a mile or so from Sher-i-Nasrya, on asking some natives where the city of *Nasirabad* or *Nasratabad*, as it is marked in capital letters on English maps (even those of the Indian Trigonometrical Survey), nobody could tell me, and everybody protested that no such city existed. (The real name of it, Sher-i-Nasrya, of course, I only learnt later.)

This was puzzling, but not astonishing, for there is a deal of fancy nomenclature on English maps.

Eventually, when I had almost despaired of reaching the place that night, although I could not have been more than a stone-throw from it, I appealed to another passer-by, riding briskly on a donkey.

"How far are we from Nasratabad?"

"Never heard the name."

"Is there a town here called Nasirabad?"

"No, there is no such town—but you must have come through a small village by that name, two farsakhs off."

"Yes, I have. Do you happen to know where the English Consulate is?"

"Oh, yes, everybody knows the English Consulate. I will take you there. It is only a short distance from here, near the city of Sher-i-Nasrya!"

Thanks to this fellow, a few minutes later I found myself greeted most effusively by Major and Mrs. Benn in their charming mud Consulate. This was on the evening of December 6th.

CHAPTER XVI

English fancy geographical names—Sher-i-Nasrya—The main street—The centre of the city—Reverence of the natives for Major Benn—A splendid type of British official—Indian and Russian goods—The Shikin Maghut cloth—Steadily increasing trade of the Nushki route—Khorassan horses for remounts—Husseinabad—Russian Vice-Consulate—Mr. Miller—Characteristic windmills—"The wind of 120 days"—Benn Bazaar.

DISAPPOINTING as it may seem that the natives themselves should be barefaced enough not to call their city by the fancy name given it by certain British geographers, we might as well explain why the natives call the capital of Sistan by its real name, Sher-i-Nasrya. The three words mean the "City of Nasr," Nasr being an abbreviation of Nasr-ed-din Shah, in honour of whom the city was named. In Sistan itself the city goes by the shortened name of mere "Sher" or "city," but letters sent by Persians from other parts of the Shah's dominions are generally addressed Sher-i-Nasrya, or simply Sher-i-Sistan.



WOMEN AT BANDAN.



DR. GOLAM JELAMI AND HIS PATIENTS.

When the place was first conquered by the father of the present Amir, Mir-Alam-Khan, it was spoken of as Nusratabad, or the "City or Victory," just the same as we speak of the "City of the Commune," or the "Eternal City," or the "City of Fogs." The name "Nusratabad" only applied to the victory and not to the city. We should certainly not wish to see the names of the three above illustrations given on maps for Paris, Rome, or London.

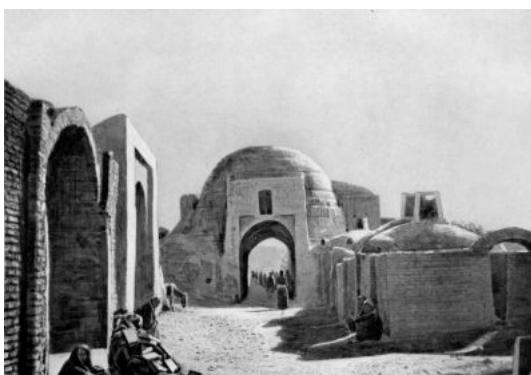
As for calling the city Nasirabad, as the Trigonometrical Survey maps do, there is no excuse whatever for this, which is a mere blunder—not the only one, unfortunately—and attributes to the city the name of a small village some eight miles off.

The present Sher-i-Nasrya is not more than twenty years old. It has a double wall all round, a higher one with semicircular castellated towers, and a lower on a mud bank with outwardly projecting semicircular protected platforms, the walls of which, eight feet high, are loopholed in a primitive fashion. On the inner side of the lower wall there is a platform all along the wall for soldiers to stand upon. The city wall, forty feet high, is separated from this outer defence by a road all round the city, and outside of all there is a moat, but with very little water in it.

The wall on the south side (really S.S.W.) has ten towers, the two central ones being close together and larger than the others, between which is the principal city gate, reached by an earthen bridge and a tortuous way, as the entrance of the outer wall is not in a line with the inner. The east and west side have only eight towers, including the corner ones, the double towers being the fourth and fifth. Every tower is semicircular, with loopholes pointing towards the sky—very useful in case of defence—and a large opening for pieces of artillery. The corner towers have two of these apertures, one under the other.

A kind of bastion or battlement has been formed by piling up the earth removed from the moat round the lower wall. The moat is forty feet broad and thirty feet deep.

A large road was made not long ago round three sides of the city by Colonel Trench, then our Consul there, so that the Amir could drive to his garden, a quarter of a mile outside the north city gate, the residence of the Amir's son, the Sar-tip. On the west side of Sher-i-Nasrya there is merely a sheep track.



THE MAIN STREET, SHER-I-NASRYA. (Showing centre of City.)

In the north-west corner of the city is a higher wall enclosing a large space and forming the citadel and Anderun, in which the Amir and part of his family reside. There are three large towers to each side of the quadrangle, the centre tower to the south being of much larger proportions than the others. A lower outer wall surrounds the higher one, and in the large tower is the entrance gate to the Governor's citadel.

The inside of the city of Sher-i-Nasrya is neither beautiful nor interesting from a pictorial point of view. There is a main street with some mud buildings standing up, others tumbled down. The full-page illustration shows the most attractive and interesting point of the city, the centre of the quadrangle where the two streets, one from south to north, the other from east to west, intersect at right angles. A dome of mud bricks has been erected over the street, and under its shade a number of the Amir's soldiers were generally to be seen with their rifles resting idle against the wall.

The type of Sistan residence can be seen in the two hovels to the right of the observer in this photograph. The two hoods on the highest point of the dome are two typical ventilators. To the left the large doorways are mere shops, with a kind of narrow verandah on which the purchasers squat when buying goods. The main street is very narrow and has a small platform almost all along its sides, on which the natives sit smoking their kilians or conversing.

I was really very much impressed, each time that I visited the city in the Consul's company, by the intense respect shown by these people to our representative. There was not a single man who did not rise and salaam when we rode through the bazaar, while many also came forward to seize the Consul's hand and pay him the customary compliments. Major Benn modestly put down this civility of the natives to the popularity of his predecessor, Major Trench, and the good manners which he had taught these men; but Major Benn himself, with his most affable manner, his unsophisticated ways, absolutely devoid of nonsensical red-tape or false pride, is to my mind also to be held responsible for the reverence which he inspires among the masses.

To me personally, I must confess, it was a very great pleasure indeed to see an English gentleman held in such respect, and that solely on account of his tact and *savoir faire*. It is not a common sight.

Of course, a certain amount of show has also to be made to impress the natives, but "show" alone, as some believe, will be of little good unless there is something more attractive behind it. Major Benn seemed to be everybody's welcomed friend; everybody, whether rich or poor, whether in smart clothes or rags, gleamed with delight as they saw him come; and Major Benn stopped his horse, now to say a kind word to a merchant, then to shake hands with a native friend, further on to talk to a little child who had run to the door of his parents' mud hut to say "salameleko" to the Consul.

It is men with sound common sense, civil manners, and human sympathy, of Benn's type, that we want to represent England everywhere, and these men, as I have ever maintained, can do Great Britain more good in foreign countries in a day than all the official red-tape in a year. It is a mistake to believe that Persians or other Asiatics are only impressed by gold braiding and by a large retinue of servants. The natives have a wonderful intuitive way of correctly gauging people, as we civilised folk do not seem able to do, and it is the man himself, and his doings, that they judge and criticise, and not so much the amount of gold braiding on a man's coat or trousers, or the cut of a resplendent uniform.

In the northern portion of the main street are the few shops with English and Russian goods. Most of the articles I saw in the couple of Indian shops were of Indian or English importation—many of the articles appeared to me of German manufacture, like the usual cheap goods one sees in the Indian bazaars.

On the opposite side of the road was the rival merchant who dealt in Russian goods, and he seemed to be doing quite a brisk business. He appeared to deal mostly in clothes. There is a kind of moleskin Russian cloth called the *shikin maghut*, of various shades, colours and qualities, which commands a ready sale both in Khorassan and Sistan, although its price is high and its quality and dye not particularly good. With a little enterprise Indian manufacturers could certainly make a similar and better cloth and easily undersell the Russian material.

It is most satisfactory to find from Captain Webb-Ware's statement that Indian trade by the Nushki-Sistan route, which was absolutely nil in the year 1895-96, and only amounted to some 64,000 rupees in 1896-97, made a sudden jump to 589,929 rupees in the following twelve months, 1897-98. It has since been steadily on the increase, as can be seen by the following figures:—

1898-99	Rupees	728,082
1899-1900	"	1,235,411
1900-01	"	1,534,452

These figures are the total amount of imports and exports by the Nushki route, beginning from 1st of April each year. In 1900-01 the imports were Rs. 748,021; the exports Rs. 786,431.

When the route comes to be better known the returns will inevitably be greatly increased, but of course only a railway—or a well-conducted service of motor vans—can make this route a really practical one for trade on a large scale. The cost of transport at present is too great.

A point which should be noted in connection with the railway is that every year a great number of horses are brought from Meshed to India via Quetta for remount purposes. In 1900-01 the number of horses brought by dealers to Quetta amounted to 408, and as the Khorassan horses are most excellent, they were promptly sold at very remunerative prices. The average price for a capital horse in Persia is from 80 to 100 rupees (15 rupees or £1). I understand that these horses when in Quetta are sold by dealers to Government at an average of 300 rupees each, leaving a very large profit indeed. As horses are very plentiful in Khorassan, if a railway existed the Government could remount its cavalry at one-third of the present cost.

Adjoining Sher-i-Nasrya to the south is the partly ruined village of Husseinabad. It has a wall, now collapsed, and a moat which forms an obtuse angle with the east wall of Sher-i-Nasrya. There are in this village some miserable little mud houses still standing up and inhabited, and the high-walled, gloomy mud building of the Russian Vice-Consulate which has lately been erected, opposite to an extensive graveyard.

The site and the outward appearance of the Russian Vice-Consulate, which one can only reach by jumping over various drain channels or treading over graves, was decidedly not one's ideal spot for a residence, but once inside the dwelling, both house and host were really charming. Mr. Miller, the Consul, was a very intelligent and able man indeed, a most wonderful linguist, and undoubtedly a very efficient officer for his country. There is also in Husseinabad a round tower where the Beluch Sirdar fought the Amir some nine years ago, and one or two windmills characteristic of Sistan and Beluchistan.

These windmills are not worked by sails in a vertical position like ours, but are indeed the simplest and most ingenious contrivance of its kind I have ever seen. The motive wheel, which revolves in a horizontal position, is encased in high walls on three sides, leaving a slit on the north side, from whence the prevalent winds of Sistan blow. The wind entering with great force by this vertical slit—the walls being so cut as to catch as much wind as possible—sets the wheel in motion—a wheel which, although made coarsely of reeds tied in six bundles fastened together by means of cross-arms of wood, revolves easily on a long iron pivot, and once set in motion attains a high speed.

The flour mill has two stories, the motive wheel occupying the entire second floor, while attached to its pivot on the ground floor is the actual grinding stone. The wheat to be ground flows into a central aperture in this stone from a suspended vessel, a simple system of strings and ropes acting as an

efficient brake on the axle of the upper wheel to control its speed, and others allowing the grain to fall uniformly and, when necessary, preventing its flow.



THE BRITISH BAZAR (HUSSEINABAD) SISTAN.

There sweeps over Sistan in the hot weather what is called the *Bad-i-sud-o-bist-roz*, or wind of the 120 days, which blows from the north-north-west, and, although this may seem unpleasant to the inhabitants, it has a most undoubtedly salubrious effect upon the climate of the province, which, owing to the great quantity of channels and stagnant water, would otherwise be most unhealthy. As it is the climate is now extremely healthy. The water of the Halmund is delicious to drink.

The suburb of Husseinabad stretches for about one mile towards the south, and contains among other places of importance the buildings of the Customs, with a caravanserai—very modest and unsafe—a picture of which is here given. What is called "Benn Bazaar," or the British Bazaar, is also found at the south-east portion of Husseinabad and facing the Consulate Hospital.

CHAPTER XVII

The British Bazaar—The pioneer traders of Sistan—Sistan a half-way house and not the terminus of the route—Comfortable route—Protection and redress—Indian tea in Persia—Persian market overstocked—Enterprise of Indian tea traders—Which are the markets worth cultivating—Articles mostly wanted in Sistan and Meshed—Exports—A problem to be faced—Ways of communication needed to cities of central Persia.

THE entire British bazaar—a modest one so far—can be taken in at a glance. The snapshot reproduced in the illustration gives a very good idea of it. Besides this, one or two Indian British merchants are established in the main street of Sher-i-Nasrya, where, as we have seen, they have opened nice shops.

The pioneer merchants of Sistan were the firm of Mahomed Ali Brothers, of Quetta, established in 1900, and represented by a very intelligent man called Seth Suliman.

The firm has branches in Birjand and Meshed. They have done good business both in Sistan, Birjand and Meshed, and have been followed in Sistan by Tek-Chand, of the wealthy firm of Chaman Singh from Shikarpur—at one time the trade-centre of Asia. This firm holds to-day the opium contract of the whole of the Sind district, and is a most enterprising concern.

Mahomed Azim Khan Brothers, of Lahore, have also opened a shop in Sistan, and so has Mahomed Hayab, agent for Shek Fars Mahomed, the biggest British firm in Meshed. It is probable that in the near future a number of other Indian firms may be induced to open branches in Sistan and Khorassan; but, if they are to avoid disappointment, they should remember that the Sistan market is merely a retail one, and there is very little wholesale trade to be transacted so far. In time to come no doubt a wholesale trade will eventually be developed.

A point which is seldom grasped, or at any rate is frequently overlooked, is that Sistan (Sher-i-Nasrya) is a mere half-way house between Quetta and Meshed, and not, as is supposed by many people, the terminus of the route. Considerable loss and disappointment have been sustained by some rash British traders, who, notwithstanding the exceptional opportunities given them to obtain accurate official information, set out with large caravans, apparently without the most rudimentary geographical knowledge, as well as without sound commercial foresight.

Another mistake is frequent. Somehow or other the idea seems to prevail among some Indian traders that Persia, or Eastern Persia, forms part of the Indian Empire, and they forget that the protection and unusual facilities which they enjoy from Quetta to Robat (the Beluch frontier) and, to a certain extent, as far as Sistan, cannot possibly be given on Persian territory beyond Sistan as far as Meshed.

Although practically across a desert, the journey from Quetta-Nushki to Sistan is—for travelling of that kind—extremely comfortable and easy; the real difficulty begins for traders when they are forced left to look after themselves on Persian soil, where there are no more clean rest-houses and where a Britisher—if travelling as a trader—is no more thought of than if he were an Asiatic trader. He is no longer the salaamed "Sahib" of the Indian cities, but becomes a mere *ferenghi*, a stranger, and is at the mercy of everybody.

Moreover, it should be well understood that the protection and redress obtainable under English law, cease on crossing the Persian frontier. Very little, if any, redress is to be obtained from Persian officials except at great cost and infinite worry, waste of time and patience.

Indian tea traders have probably been the greatest sufferers in consequence of their rash ventures, and they will probably suffer even more in the future if they do not exercise greater caution in ascertaining beforehand the suitable markets for their teas and the actual cost of transport to the markets selected. Several traders have brought very large caravans of Indian tea to Sistan on various

occasions, believing that they had arrived at the end of their journey, and, after having paid the heavy duty imposed upon goods introduced into the country, have found before them the option of going the 600 miles back to Quetta or continuing at great expense, *via* Bam to Kerman, a long journey with doubtful results at the end; or of going to Birjand, Meshed, Teheran, where they have eventually been compelled to sell at a loss or to pay the additional Russian duty and send the tea on to Moscow.

The Persian market is at present very much blocked up with Indian teas, and great caution should be exercised by intending exporters from India. In time to come, when good roads have been made in every direction, or railways constructed, and cost of transport greatly minimised, Persia will be, I think, a considerable buyer of Indian teas; but as matters are to-day the expense of conveying the tea to the various Persian markets, especially by the land route, is too great to make any profit possible at the very low prices paid by the Persians for tea.

Tea exported overland to the Meshed market (not to Sistan) realised, before the market became overstocked, better prices than the sea-borne tea *via* Bandar Abbas. It is certain that the delicate aroma of tea is not improved by being exposed to the warm sea air, no matter how carefully it has been packed. And as Major Webb-Ware, the political agent at Chagai, points out, tea despatched by the land route direct from the gardens or from Calcutta is not liable to the numerous incidental charges, commissions and transhipments which are a matter of course upon teas sent *via* Bandar Abbas or other Persian Gulf ports.

The demand for unspoiled teas brought overland is considerable in Russia and all over Europe, even more than in Persia, and when a sensible understanding has been arrived at with Russia to let Indian teas proceed in transit through that country, there is no reason why the better Indian teas should not favourably compete all over Europe with the China caravan teas.

The Persian market, to my mind, speaking generally, will only be able to purchase the inferior teas, the Persians as individuals being comparatively poor. Superior teas in small quantities, however, may find a sale at good prices among the official classes and the few richer folks, but not in sufficient quantities to guarantee a large import. The same remarks, I think, would apply to teas finding their way into Western Afghanistan from various points on the Sistan-Meshed route.

The Indian tea-traders have shown very commendable enterprise in attempting to push their teas by the overland route, and trying to exploit the new markets which the Nushki-Meshed route has thrown open to them, but their beginning has been made too suddenly and on too large a scale, which I fear will cause a temporary loss to some of them. A gradual, steady development of the tea trade is wanted in Persia, not a rush and violent competition flooding the market with tea that has to be sold at a loss. When the natives all over Persia have by degrees got accustomed to Indian tea, and when it is brought in at a cheap price, Indian teas are likely to be popular in Persia.



THE WALL OF SHER-I-NASRYA AT SUNSET.

I may be wrong, but, to my mind, the greater profits on Indian teas brought by this route will in the future be made not in Persia itself, but in Transcaspia, Turkestan, Russia and Central Europe, where people can pay well for a good article. Great credit should be given to the Indian and Dehra Dun Tea Associations for despatching representatives to study the requirements of the Persian market on the spot; but, as Captain Webb-Ware suggests in the *Gazette of India*, the tea associations would do well to turn their attention to the sale of Indian teas in Russia, and to send some experimental consignments of their teas to Moscow by the overland route. The same remarks might also apply to a great many other English or Indian manufactured goods.

We complain a great deal that the Russian protective tariff is high, but it is mild when compared with the murderous protectionism of the United States or of our beloved friend Germany. And, after all, does this protection keep out our goods from those countries? By no means. Russia's industries are indeed fast developing, but they are far from sufficient to supply her own wants. English, German, and American goods find their way even to the most remote spots of Siberia. It is, then, a problem worth considering whether "free trade Persia," with her English and Indian imports amounting to one million four hundred thousand pounds sterling (£1,400,000), is a customer so well worth cultivating as protectionist Russia, which buys from us nearly twenty-two millions' (£21,974,952) worth yearly.

In regard to the Quetta-Meshed route, it would strike a casual observer that from our geographical situation we might, without much difficulty, kill two birds with one stone by a happy combination—Persia being dealt with *en passant*, as it were, while aiming for quicker, sounder, and more extensive markets further north.

Persia is a good market for Indian indigo, which has, so far, commanded a ready sale.

In Sistan itself—which, it cannot be too emphatically repeated, is to-day only a comparatively poor and sparsely-populated district—the articles which have, so far, found a quick retail sale, have been Indian assorted spices, second-hand apparel, sugar, tea, boots, cheap cotton cloths, matches, kerosene oil, thread, needles, cheap cutlery, scissors, small looking glasses.

The Amir and the Sardars have at different times made purchases of boots, shoes, saddlery, silk, woollen and cotton cloths, rugs, shawls, crockery, and enamel ware, watches, chains, and knives, and have also bought a considerable number of English-made fancy goods, furniture, stationery, cigarettes, cigars and tobacco, &c. The humbler Sistanis purchase very freely from the Indian British shops, but cannot afford to pay very high prices; but the high officials pay cash and give a good price for all they buy.

Speaking generally, the articles which are mostly wanted at present are those mentioned in the official report. For these commodities there is a steady demand in the markets of Sistan and Khorassan, but the supply, it should be remembered, should be in proportion to the size of the population. Sistan, Birjand, Meshed, are not London nor Paris nor Berlin.

The articles wanted are:—

- Woollen stuffs, flannels, muslins, mulls, sheetings, chintzes, cottons, &c.
- Velvets, satins, silks, brocades.
- Indigo of medium and good quality. (Oudh indigo is principally in demand in Bushire.)
- Iron, brass and copper sheets.
- Sulphur matches.
- Spices, including cinnamon, cardamums, cloves, pepper, turmeric, &c.
- Rice (for Sistan).
- Tea, black for Persia, and green for Afghanistan and Transcaspia.
- Coffee (in berry).
- Refined sugar, loaf.
- Ginger preserve (in jars).
- Sal-ammoniac.
- Baizes (specially of high class), Khinkabs and gold cloth.
- Cotton turbans (lungis) of all qualities, including those with pure gold fringes.
- Leather goods.
- Boots (Cawnpore and English).
- Saddlery (Cawnpore, as the English is too expensive).
- Glass-ware.
- Enamel-ware.
- Cutlery.
- Ironmongery of every description. Cheap padlocks find a ready sale.
- Watches (cheap).
- Jewellery.
- Kalai (for tinning copper vessels).

Fire-arms would command a very ready sale, but their importation is strictly forbidden.

The articles of export from Khorassan and Sistan are wool, ghi, saffron, dried fruit of various kinds, hides, jujubes, assafoetida, pistachio-nuts, barak, kurak, gum, valuable carpets, and some turquoises.

In Sistan itself wheat and oats are plentiful, but their export to foreign countries is not permitted. Opium finds its way out of the country *via* Bandar Abbas, and wool, ghi, feathers, carpets, and assafoetida are conveyed principally to Kerman, Birjand, Meshed, Yezd, the Gulf, and Quetta.

One of the principal problems of the new land route to India is not only how to induce British traders to go to Persia, but how to solve the more difficult point of persuading the big Persian traders to cross the bridge and venture into India. They seem at present too indolent and suspicious to undertake such a long journey, and would rather pay for luxuries to be brought to their doors than go and get them themselves.

With the assistance, both moral and financial, of the enterprising Major Sykes, a large caravan was sent from Kerman to Quetta with Persian goods, and paid satisfactorily, but others that followed seem to have had a good many disasters on the road (on Persian territory) and fared less well. Major Sykes's effort was most praiseworthy, for indeed, as regards purely Persian trade, I think Kerman or Yezd must in future be the aiming points of British caravans rather than Meshed. These places have comparatively large populations and the field of operations is practically unoccupied, whereas in Meshed Russian competition is very strong.

With the present ways of communication across the Salt Desert, it is most difficult and costly to attempt remunerative commercial communication with these towns. Small caravans could not possibly pay expenses, and large caravans might fare badly owing to lack of water, while the circuitous road *via* Bam is too expensive.

When more direct tracks, with wells at each stage, after the style of the Nushki-Sistan route, have been constructed between Robat and Kerman, and also between Sher-i-Nasrya and Kerman, and Sher-i-Nasrya and Yezd, matters will be immensely facilitated.

CHAPTER XVIII

Sistan's state of transition—British Consul's tact—Advancing Russian influence—Safety—A fight between Sistanis and Afghans—The Sar-tip—Major Benn's pluck and personal influence—Five Afghans seriously wounded—The city gates closed—The Customs caravanserai—A British caravanserai needed—Misstatements—Customs officials—Fair and just treatment to all—Versatile Major Benn—A much needed assistant—More Consulates wanted—Excellent British officials—Telegraph line necessary—A much-talked-of railway—The salutary effect of a garrison at Robat frontier post.

SISTAN is in a state of rapid transition, and it is doubtful whether the position of the three or four Europeans on duty there is one of perfect safety. The natives are so far undoubtedly and absolutely favourable to British influence in preference to Russian, a state of affairs mainly due to the personal tact of Majors Trench and Benn rather than to instructions from home, but great caution should be exercised in the future if this prestige, now at its highest point, is to be maintained.

The Russians are advancing very fast, and their influence is already beginning to be felt in no slight degree. The Sistanis may or may not be relied upon. They are not perfectly Europeanised like peoples of certain parts of Western Persia, nor are they quite so amenable to reason as could be wished. They can easily be led, or misled, and bribed, and are by no means easy folks to deal with. For a few tomans one can have people assassinated, the Afghan frontier so close at hand being a guarantee of impunity for murderers, and fights between the townspeople and the Afghans or Beluch, in which many people are injured and killed, are not uncommon.



THE SAR-TIP.

One of these fights, between Sistanis and Afghans (under British protection), took place when I was in Sistan, and I think it is only right that it should be related, as it proves very forcibly that, as I have continually urged in this book, calm and tact, gentleness and fairness, have a greater and more lasting control over Persians than outward pomp and red-tape.

The Consul and I, after calling on the Amir, proceeded to visit the Sar-tip, the Amir's first son by his legal wife. The Sar-tip is the head of a force of cavalry, and inhabits a country house, the Chahar Bagh, in a garden to the north outside the city. He is a bright and intelligent youth, who had travelled with Dr. Golam Jelami to India—from which country he had recently returned, and where he had gone to consult specialists about his sadly-failing eyesight.

The Sar-tip, of whom a portrait is here given, received us most kindly and detained us till dark. Being Ramzam-time we then bade him good-bye, and were riding home when, as we neared the Consulate gate, a man who seemed much excited rushed to the Consul and handed him a note from the Belgian Customs officer. As I was still convalescent—this was my first outing—and not allowed out after dusk, Major Benn asked me to go back to the Consulate as he was called to the Customs caravanserai on business. I suspected nothing until a messenger came to the Consulate with news. A crowd of some 300 Sistanis had attacked some fifteen Afghan camel men, who had come over with a caravan of tea from Quetta. These camel drivers had been paid several thousand rupees for their services on being dismissed, and some money quarrel had arisen.

On the arrival of the Consul the fight was in full swing, and he found a crowd of howling Sistanis throwing stones and bricks at the Afghans. At Major Benn's appearance, notwithstanding that their blood was up and their temper, one would think, beyond control, the Sistanis immediately opened a way for him, some even temporarily stopping fighting to make a courteous salaam. This will show in what respect our Consul is held.

The Afghans, having by this time realised that they had been insulted, and having, furthermore, discovered the loss of some money—which they only detected when they went for their rifles and swords, which they kept together in a safe place with their treasure—formed up in line and, with drawn swords, made a rush on the Sistanis.

Major Benn with considerable pluck dashed between the fighting men, seizing with his left hand the rifle of the leader—who had knelt down and was on the point of firing—and with his right hand got hold of the blade—fortunately blunt—of another Afghan's sword, who was slashing away at the Sistanis near him. The force of the blow caused quite a wound in the gallant Major's hand, but suddenly, as by magic owing to the respect he commanded on both sides, his action put a stop to the fight.

Seizing this opportunity he talked to them calmly in his usual quiet, jocular manner, and told the Afghans how, by behaving in this fashion, while under his protection, they were doing him harm in the eyes of the Persians in whose country they were guests, and that if they had any claim they must apply to him and not take the law into their own hands. With his keen sense of humour he even succeeded with some joke or other in raising a laugh from both belligerent parties, and requested them to sit down and give up their arms into his custody, which they willingly did.

The Afghans seated themselves at the further end of the caravanserai, while the Sistanis, whom he next addressed in the kindest way, were persuaded to desist from using further violence. He managed to turn the whole thing into a joke, and eventually the Sistanis dispersed laughing and retired within the wall of their city; but, indeed, there were five Afghans left on the ground severely wounded,—one with a fractured skull being carried to the Consulate Hospital in a dying condition.

The Afghans possessed some excellent Russian rifles, a great many of which find their way into Afghanistan from the north.

The Consul, when the row was over, proceeded to the Amir, who had the gates of the city instantly closed and promised the Consul that they should not be opened again until the Consul could go the next day to identify the ringleaders of the attacking Sistanis. The Amir received the Consul with

more than usually marked respect, and showed himself greatly disturbed at the occurrence. He took personal charge of the keys of the city and undertook to mete out severe punishment upon the offenders.

The city gates, which are daily opened at sunrise, remained closed the greater portion of the day at the Consul's request, but for a consideration the doorkeepers let out occasional citizens,—in all probability those very ones that should have been kept in.

Unfortunately, being Ramzam-time, when Mussulmans sit up feasting the greater part of the night, as they are compelled to fast when the sun is above the horizon, his Excellency the Amir was unable to attend to even this important matter, which was left to slide from day to day. The Consul, however, although extremely patient, was the last man to let things go to the wall, and no doubt in the end the leaders were duly punished and compensation paid.

The illustration shows the Customs caravanserai, in front of which the fight took place. Two of the domed rooms shown in the picture are occupied by Mr. Miletor, the Belgian Customs officer, in Persian employ. The others are occupied by camel-men or native travellers, there being no other caravanserai of the kind in Sher-i-Nasrya.



THE CUSTOMS CARAVANSERAI, SHER-I-NASRYA, SISTAN. (Belgian Customs Officer in foreground.)

It would be a very great addition to the British Consulate, now that so many Beluch and Afghans, all under British protection, travel through Sistan, if a British caravanserai could be built in which they, their goods and their camels, might enjoy comparative safety. The expense of putting it up would be very small, and it would avoid the constant friction which is bound to exist at present in a country where honesty is not the chief forte of the lower people, and where quarrels are ever rampant. Even during the short stay of Messrs. Clemenson and Marsh's caravan, several articles were stolen under their very eyes in the Consulate shelter, and at the time of my visit caravans, British or otherwise, were absolutely at the mercy of the natives. The goods were left out in the open in front of the caravanserai, and the Customs people had not sufficient men to protect them from interference at the hands of the lower people.

I have seen it stated by correspondents in leading London papers that "Russian" Customs officials were stationed in Sistan, and interfered greatly with British caravans. That is mere fiction from beginning to end. As I have already stated, there is not a single Russian in the Customs anywhere in Persia. In Sistan the only official—a Belgian—far from interfering with the caravans, is of great help to them and does all in his power within the limits of his duty to be of assistance to them. The Consul himself was full of praise of the extreme fairness and justice to all alike of the Belgian official. There never was the slightest trouble or hitch so long as traders were prepared to comply with Persian laws, and so long as people paid the duty on the goods entering the country no bother of any kind was given to anybody, either British or others.

On April 3rd, 1901, the Persian Government introduced a law abolishing all inland Customs Houses and transit dues, and substituting instead a *rahdari* tax of 6 annas per 240 pounds. This tax is payable on crossing the frontier, and is levied in addition to the 5 per cent. *ad valorem* duty to which the Persian Government is entitled under the existing International Customs Convention. The rate of duty levied (5 per cent.), is calculated on the actual value of goods, plus the cost of transport.

The Sistan Consul, as well as the officials of the Nushki Sistan route in Beluchistan, go to an immense deal of trouble to be of use to British traders and travellers, and everything is made as easy for them as is compatible with the nature of the country and existing laws.

A great deal of extra heavy work was thrown upon the shoulders of Major Benn, who acted in no less than three official capacities—Consul, Postmaster, and Banker—as well as, unofficially, as architect, house-builder, and general reference officer. It is very satisfactory to learn that this autumn (1902) an assistant is to be sent out to him from India, for the work seemed indeed too heavy for one man. Day and night's incessant work would in time have certainly told on even the cheerful disposition and abnormally wiry constitution of Major Benn, who, besides being a most loyal and careful official, takes a great deal of personal pride in fighting hard to win the severe race which will result in our eventually acquiring or losing Sistan and Eastern Persia commercially. Major Benn is most decidedly very far ahead in the race at present, and owing to him British prestige happens to be at its zenith, but greater support will be needed in the future if this advantageous race is to be continued up to the winning post.

Were a Vice-Consulate established at Birjand, as I have said before, the Sistan Consular work would be relieved of much unnecessary strain, the distance from Birjand to Sistan being too great under present conditions to allow the Consul to visit the place even yearly. The medical British Agent whom we have there at present is excellent, but the powers at his disposal are small, and a Consulate with an English officer in charge would most decidedly enhance British prestige in that important city, as well as being a useful connecting link between Sistan and Meshed, a distance of close upon 500 miles.

It was a most excellent step to select for the Consular work in Eastern and Southern Persia men from the Military Political Service, instead of the usual Foreign Office men, who are probably better adapted for countries already developed. The Political Service is a most perfect body of gentlemanly, sensible, active-minded, well-educated men of versatile talents, the pick of the healthiest and

cleverest Englishmen in our Indian Service. They cannot help doing good wherever they are sent. Captain Trench, Major Benn, Major Phillott, Captain White, have all answered perfectly, and have all done and are doing excellent work.

What is most needed at present in Sistan is a telegraph line to Nushki. Should everybody in the Sistan Consulate be murdered, it would be the best part of a fortnight or three weeks before the news could reach India at the present rate of post going. If assistance were needed it could not reach Sistan from Quetta in less than a couple of months, by which time, I think, it would be of little use to those in danger. And the danger, mind you, does exist. It seems rather hard that we should leave men who work, and work hard and well, for their country absolutely at the mercy of destiny.

The next most important point would be to join Sistan, or at least Robat, on the Perso-Beluch frontier, with the long-talked-of railway to Quetta, but of this we shall have occasion to speak later. So far the line has been sanctioned to Nushki, but that point, it must be remembered, is still 500 miles distant from Sistan, a considerable distance across, what is for practical purposes, desert country.

The third point—the easiest of all, which would involve little expense, but would have a most salutary effect—would be to maintain a small garrison at the Perso-Beluch-Afghan frontier post of Robat. This, to my mind, would at the present moment strengthen the hands of our officials in Persia to a most extraordinary extent.

Something tangible, which the natives themselves could see and talk about, together with the knowledge that a smart body of soldiers could soon be on the spot if required, would not only assure the so far doubtful safety of the few but precious English lives in those parts, but would add enormously to our prestige and make us not only revered but feared.

CHAPTER XIX

The history of the Sistan Vice-Consulate—Major Chevenix Trench—Laying the foundation of the Consulate—Hoisting the British flag—Major Benn—A terrible journey—A plucky Englishwoman—The mud Consulate—Its evolution—The new buildings—Ka-khanas—Gardening under difficulties—How horses are kept—The enclosing wall—The legend of Trenchabad city—The Consulate Mosque—Dr. Golam Jelami—The hospital—Successful operations—Prevalent complaints of Sistan—The Sistan Sore.

THE history of the Sistan Vice-Consulate does not go back very far, but is, nevertheless, very interesting. We will recapitulate it in a few words.

Major Brazier-Creagh was sent to Sistan on a special mission; as has already been said, and Captain F. C. Webb-Ware, C. I. E., Political Assistant at Chagai, visited the place every year at the end of his annual trip along the new route in North Beluchistan from Quetta to Robat, the most Eastern station of the route prior to entering Persian territory. Major Sykes visited Sistan in 1896 in connection with the Perso-Beluch Boundary Commission and again in 1899, when he travelled here from Kerman by the easier southern route *via* Bam.

It was on February 15th, 1900, that a Russian Vice-Consul for that important Province was appointed to Sistan to take the place of a Persian who was a news-writer in Russian employ. Major G. Chevenix Trench was then specially selected by the Viceroy of India as a suitable person to look after British interests in that region—and indeed no better man could have been chosen.

Having given up his appointment in India this officer left Quetta on March 7th, 1900, and arrived at Sher-i-Nasrya on the 18th of April, accompanied by Major R. E. Benn, who was on a year's furlough, and can be said, I believe, to be the first European who has travelled all the way from India to England by this overland route, *via* Meshed-Transcaspia.

Major Trench, prior to leaving for Meshed to take up his appointment of Consul-General for Khorassan, being unable to stand the fierce heat of the sun, laid the foundation stone—it was a "sun-dried mud brick," to be accurate—of the present temporary buildings of the Consulate. A domed mud hut *à la Persane* was built, with an additional spacious window, but no framework and no glass.

The great difficulty of hoisting the British flag, which seems to have been strongly objected to during the Perso-Afghan Commission when Sir Frederic Goldsmid passed through Sistan in 1872, was overcome mainly owing to the great tact shown by Major Trench. The Union Jack flew daily, gaily and undisturbed, over the mud hovel which will probably be during the next few years one of the most important consular posts we possess in Asia.

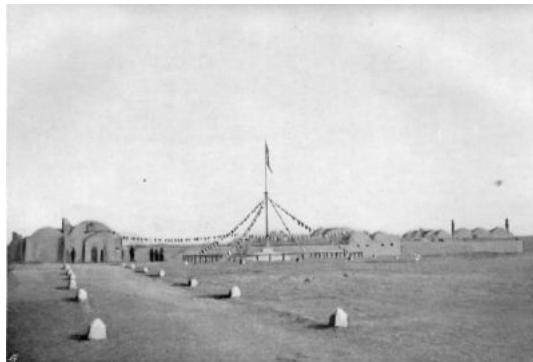
Major Benn, who had hastily proceeded to London on a long expected holiday, was immediately recalled to replace Major Trench. Major Benn, accompanied by his plucky and devoted wife and child, journeyed a second time across the Beluchistan desert to reach his post.

The journey was terrible, owing to torrential rains and snowstorms. When already several marches out they were compelled to return to Quetta as their child had become very ill. But they were despatched again on their duty. They encountered severe storms; the country was practically flooded; some of their camels died, and for days at a time they were in the desert unable to move, the country being in many places inundated. In a blizzard two of their men lost themselves and died from exposure, but the party advanced slowly but surely, the plucky little English lady standing all the hardships without a murmur.

Major Benn having been ordered to make a detour, they went down into the Sarhad, south of the Kuh-i-Malek-Siah, and it was not till February 15th, 1901, that they eventually reached Sher-i-Nasrya, and were received by Trench in his mud-hut Consulate, he having moved into a tent. Major Trench, on the arrival of Major Benn, proceeded to Meshed.

During Major Benn's time the Consulate buildings went through a marvellous evolution. It may be recollected that I reached Sistan in December, 1901, or only ten months after his arrival, but there

were already several additional mud-rooms built and connected so as to form a suite of a spacious office, sitting-room, dining-room, two bedrooms and a storeroom. There were doors, made locally by imported Indian carpenters, but no glass to the windows,—muslin nailed to the wall answering the purpose of blinds. Famished dogs, attracted by the odour of dinner, would occasionally jump through this flimsy protection, much to the despair of Mrs. Benn—but those were only small troubles. Thieves found their way into the rooms, and even succeeded in stealing Mrs. Benn's jewellery. There was no protection whatever against an attack in force, and the natives were at first most impudent in their curiosity.



THE SISTAN CONSULATE ON CHRISTMAS DAY, 1901.

Being a Mussulman country, things were at first very uncomfortable for Mrs. Benn until the natives got accustomed to the sight of an English lady, she being the first they had ever seen, or who had ever travelled so far.

The temporary mud-rooms were gradually furnished and decorated with so much taste that they became simply charming, but a new Consulate is now being built, which, by comparison in size and style, seems quite palatial. It is being constructed of real baked bricks, Major Benn having put up a serviceable kiln for the purpose, and the handsome structure is so sensibly built after a design by the versatile Consul, that when finished it will fully combine English comfort with the exigencies of the climate, the incessant northerly winds of the summer months—from June to the end of August—rendering life unbearable unless suitable arrangements to mitigate their effects are provided.

Into the northern wall *ka khanas* or "camel thorn compartments" are being built some four feet deep, filled with camel thorn. To make them effective two coolies are employed all day long to swish buckets of water on to them. The wind forcing its way through causes rapid evaporation and consequent cooling of the air in the rooms. When the wind stops the heat is, however, unbearable. The rooms are also provided with *badjirs*, or wind-catchers, on the domed roof, but these can only be used before the heat becomes too great.

An attempt had been made to start a garden, both for vegetables and flowers, but the hot winds burnt up everything. Only four cabbages out of hundreds that were planted had survived, and these were carefully nursed by Mrs. Benn for our Christmas dinner. Unluckily, on Christmas Eve a cow entered the enclosure and made a meal of the lot!

Another garden is being started, but great difficulty is experienced in making anything grow owing to the quantity of salt in the ground and the terrific winds. Poplars have come up fairly well under shelter of a wall, but no tree can hope to stand upright when it attains a height where the wind can reach it. In fact, what few trees one sees about near Sher-i-Nasrya are stooping southward in a pitiful manner.

The Consul's horses and those of the escort are kept out in the open. They are tethered and left well wrapped up, wearing nearly double the amount of covering to protect them from the heat during the hot summer months that they do in winter, on the principle explained in previous chapters. It is not possible to keep them in stables, owing to the terrible white fly, which has a poisonous sting. When out in the open the flies and mosquitoes are blown away by the wind.

It was satisfactory to find that, although the Government did not see its way to furnish the Consulate with a wall for the protection of the Consul and his wife, whose personal property was constantly being stolen, an allowance was at once granted with instructions to build at once a high wall all round the Consulate when one of the Government horses was stolen!

This wall, a wonderful bit of work, was put up in a fortnight, while I was in bed with fever, and on my getting up from bed I had the surprise of finding the Consulate, which, when I had arrived, stood—a few lonely buildings—in the middle of a sandy plain, now surrounded by a handsome mud wall with a most elaborate castellated, fortress-like gate of Major Benn's own design. The wall encloses a good many acres of land; it would be rash to say how many! This has given rise among the natives to the report that a new city is rising near Sher-i-Nasrya, called Trenchabad, or Trench's city.

Major Benn is to be complimented on the wonderful work he succeeds in getting done with comparatively little expenditure for the Government, and there is no doubt that he manages to impress the natives and to keep England's prestige high. He imported from Quetta a flagstaff, in pieces, which when erected measured no less than 45 feet, and on this, the highest flagstaff in Persia, flies from sunrise to sunset the Union Jack. Except on grand occasions only a small flag can be used in summer, owing to the fierce winds which tear the larger flags to pieces the moment they are put up.

Major Benn scored heavily in the esteem of Sistanis when he had the bright idea of erecting a handsome little mosque within the Consulate boundary, wherein any traveller, whether Persian or Beluch or Afghan or any other Mussulman, can find shelter and a meal at the private expense of the Consul. People devoid of a house, too, or beggars when in real need are always helped.

The erection of this mosque has greatly impressed the Persians with the respect of England for the Mahomedan religion. On the religious festival day of the "sheep eat" the place is crowded with Beluch and Persians alike, the Mahomedan members of the British Consulate having raised a fund to feed all worshippers at the mosque during the day.

Major Benn, who has really the energy of half-a-dozen men taken together, has organised some weekly gymkhanas, with the double object of giving his Indian escort of fourteen men of the 7th Bombay Lancers and a Duffadar (non-commissioned native officer) a little recreation, and of providing some amusement to the town folks; exhibitions of horsemanship, tent-pegging and sword exercises are given, in which some of the Persian gentlemen occasionally also take part.

The Sistanis of all classes turn out in great force to witness these displays, and—for a Persian crowd—I was really amazed at their extraordinarily quiet and respectful demeanour. Each man who entered the grounds courteously salaamed the Consul before sitting down, and there was unstinted clapping of hands—a way of applauding which they have learnt from Benn—and great enthusiasm as the Lancers displayed their skill at the various feats.

The phonograph was also invariably brought out on these occasions, and set working near the flagstaff, much to the delight and astonishment of the Sistanis, who, I believe, are still at a loss to discover where the voices they hear come from. To study the puzzled expressions on the awe-stricken faces of the natives, as they intently listened to the music, was intensely amusing, especially when the machine called out such words as "mamma," which they understood, or when it reproduced the whistling of a nightingale, which sent them raving with delight.

Perhaps the most touching part of these performances was when loyal Major Benn wound up with "God save the King," scraped on the record by a tired and blunted needle—phonograph needles are scarce in Sistan and could not be renewed for the sake of only one and last tune—and we Britshers removed our hats. Now, to the natives of Persia removing one's hat seems as ludicrous a thing as can be done, just as their equivalent discarding of shoes seems very ridiculous to us; but the natives, to whom the meaning we attach to our National Anthem had been explained, behaved with the utmost reverence notwithstanding the trying circumstances, and many actually placed their right hands to their foreheads in sign of salaam until the anthem was over.

Another department in the Consulate of great interest is the spacious hospital containing a well-supplied dispensary, where an average of forty daily patients are treated gratis by Dr. Golam Jelami and a compounder.

Patients came on in their turn with various complaints, and they were disposed of with due speed, undergoing the necessary treatment with various degrees of grace.

The hospital contains besides the dispensary, an in-patients' and an accident ward, office, operating room and doctor's quarters, the whole place being kept beautifully clean by Indian attendants—Dr. Golam Jelami taking great pride in his work and in the success and efficacy of the establishment.

Being himself a Mussulman Dr. Golam Jelami has a great advantage over a Christian doctor in attending the natives, and, in fact, he has become the medical adviser to the Amir and his entire family, and a favourite with all the *Darbaris* or people at the Amir's court owing to his extreme tact, skill and charm of manner.

He has performed some quite extraordinary operations. One day when the Consul and Mrs. Benn were about to sit down to lunch, a huge tumour, which had just been excised from the back of a man's neck, was sent round on a tray for the Consul's inspection; and lenses of the eye from successful cataract operations are frequently sent in for the Consul's approval.

The climate of Sistan is very healthy generally, and the Halmund water delicious—by some it is said to be an actual tonic—but the hot winds of the summer and the salt sand cause severe injury to the eyes. Cataract is a most common complaint, even in comparatively young persons. Also ophthalmia in its two forms. Confusion of vision is frequent even among children, and myopia, but not so common as the opacity of the cornea.

The most common complaint is the "Sistan Sore," which affects people on the face or any other part of the body. It is known by the local name of *Dana-i-daghi*. It begins with irregularly-shaped pustules—very seldom circular—that come to suppuration and burst, and if not checked in time last for several months, extending on the skin surface, above which they hardly rise.

The digestion of Sistanis, although naturally good, is interfered with by the abuse of bad food, such as *krut*, or dried curd—most rancid, indigestible stuff.

Venereal complaints are also most common, the most terrible form of all, curiously enough, being treated even by Persian doctors with mercury—a treatment called the *Kalyan Shingrif*—but administered in such quantities that its effects are often worse than the ailment itself.

Partly owing to this complaint and stomach troubles and the chewing of tobacco, the teeth are usually bad, black and decayed even in young people, nor have the Sistanis themselves any way of saving the teeth.

Siphilitic tonsilitis is almost the only throat complaint noticeable in Sistan, but inflammation of the palate is not rare. Heart disease is practically unknown in Sistan, and there are but very few lung affections.

The bones of the skeleton are extremely hard and possess abnormal elasticity of texture, and are, therefore, not easily fractured.

There are several kinds of hair diseases caused by climatic conditions and dirt, as well as cutaneous affections of the scalp.

The nails both of fingers and toes are healthy, not brittle, with well-marked fibre showing through their smooth surface, and of good shape.

The tape worm, so common in many other parts of Persia, is absolutely unknown in Sistan, and this is probably due to the excellent water obtainable.

Lunacy is also scarcely ever met with in Sistan in any violent form, but cases of hypochondria are not unusual, produced principally by indigestion—at least, judging by the symptoms shown.

The women are much healthier than the men, as they lead a more rational life, but neither possess the power of producing large families. One or two is the average number of children in healthy families. Twins and triplets are unknown in Sistan, or so I was assured.

The mode of life of Sistan men of the better classes is not conducive to large families, the men not returning to their wives till midnight or later, having spent the greater part of the day in orgies with their friends, when, what with opium smoking and what with being stuffed with food and saturated with gallons of tea, they are dead tired.

Abortion seldom occurs naturally, and is never artificially procured, owing to the local laws. Women do not experience any difficulty during labour and operations are unheard of.

The umbilicus of children, here, too, as in Western Persia, is tied at birth in two or three places with a common string, and the remainder cut with a pair of scissors or a knife. A mid-wife, called *daya*, is requested to perform this operation. Abnormalities of any kind are extremely uncommon.

CHAPTER XX

Laid up with fever—Christmas Day—A visit to the Amir—Hashmat-ul-Mulk—An ancient city over eighty miles long—Extreme civility of Persian officials—An unusual compliment—Prisoners—Personal revenge—"An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth"—Punishments and crime—Fines—Bastinado—Disfigurement—Imprisonment—Blowing criminals from a gun—Strangling and decapitation.

It was my intention to remain in Sistan only four or five days, but unluckily my fever got so bad—temperature above 104°—that, notwithstanding my desire to continue the journey, Major Benn most kindly would not allow me. I was placed in bed where, covered up with every available blanket, I remained close upon three weeks. The tender care of Major and Mrs. Benn, to whom my gratitude cannot be expressed in words, the skilful treatment of Dr. Golam Jelami, the Consulate doctor,—not to speak of the unstinted doses of quinine, phenacetin, castor-oil, and other such delightful fare, to which may also be added some gallons of the really delicious water of the Halmund river,—at last told upon me and eventually, after twenty-one days of sweating I began to pull up again and was able to get up.

The fever was shaken off altogether, but strange to say, whether it was that I was unaccustomed to medicine, or whether it was due to the counter-effects of the violent fever, my temperature suddenly went down and remained for several months varying from two to three degrees below normal. Medical men tell me that this should mean physical collapse, but on this point I can only say that I have never in my life felt stronger nor better.

I was just out of bed on Christmas Day, when the Consulate was decorated with flags, and Major Benn in his uniform had his escort of Bombay Lancers on parade. There was an official Christmas dinner in good old English style, with a fine plum pudding and real sixpences in it, followed by fire-crackers; while illuminations were burning bright on the Consulate wall and roofs. Official visitors were received, the doctor of the Russian Vice-Consulate and the Belgian Customs Officer forming the whole European community of Sher-i-Nasrya.

Sadek, who was great on charity, especially when it went to my account, in order to thank Providence for my recovery sacrificed two sheep, and their meat was distributed to the clamouring poor. Such an expedient was necessary, Sadek said, or I should certainly get fever again!

Owing to the Russian calendar being in disagreement with ours, the Consul, Mrs. Benn and I were most cordially entertained to a second Christmas dinner by the Russian Consul, who had just returned from Meshed, and we had a most delightful evening. For a convalescent, I could not help thinking so many Christmas dinners coming together might have been fatal, but fortunately, owing entirely to the charming and thoughtful kindness of my hosts, both English and Russian, I managed to pull through with no very ill effects. The Consular escort of Cossacks looked very business-like and smart as they paraded in the yard which had been duly illuminated for the occasion.

The Amir expressed a wish to see me, and as I was just able to get on a horse the Consul and I paid an official visit to the Governor in the citadel. We rode in full state with the escort of Lancers, and traversed the town along the main street, entering from the South gate.

I was again much struck by the intense respect shown by the natives towards Major Benn, all rising as we passed and making a profound salaam. We traversed the greater portion of the city by the main street, and then arrived at the gate of the citadel in the north-west part of Sher-i-Nasrya.

The door was so low that we had some difficulty in entering without dismounting, and just as we were squeezing in, as it were, through this low passage, one of the disreputable-looking soldiers on guard fired his gun—in sign of salute—which somewhat startled our horses and set them a-kicking.

In the small court where we dismounted was a crowd of soldiers and servants, and here another salute was fired by the sentry. Through winding, dilapidated passages and broken-down courts we were conveyed to the Amir's room—a very modest chamber, whitewashed, and with humble carpets on the floor. A huge wood fire was burning in the chimney, and the furniture consisted of a table and six chairs, three folding ones and three Vienna cane ones, arranged symmetrically on either side of the table.



MAJOR R. E. BENN, British Consul for Sistan, and his Escort of 7th Bombay Lancers.

The Amir sat on a folding chair on one side of the table, and the Consul, Ghul Khan and myself in a row on the opposite side. We were most cordially received by Hashmat-ul-Mulk, the Amir, who—this being Ramzam or fasting time—showed ample evidence of mis-spent nights. He had all the semblance of a person addicted to opium smoking. His Excellency was unshaven and unwashed, and seemed somewhat dazed, as if still under the effects of opium. His discoloured eyes stared vaguely, now at the Consul, now at Ghul Khan, now at me, and he occasionally muttered some compliment or other at which we all bowed.

Presently, however, his conversation became most interesting, when, having gone through all these tedious preliminary formalities, he began to describe to me the many ruined cities of Sistan. He told me how at one time, centuries and centuries gone by, Sistan was the centre of the world, and that a city existed some twenty miles off, named Zaidan, the length of which was uninterrupted for some eighty or ninety miles.

"The remains of this city," he said, "are still to be seen, and if you do not believe my words you can go and see for yourself. In fact," added the Amir, "you should not leave Sistan without going to inspect the ruins. The city had flat roofs in a continuous line, the houses being built on both sides of a main road. A goat or a sheep could practically have gone along the whole length of the city," went on the Amir, to enforce proof of the continuity of buildings of Zaidan. "But the city had no great breadth. It was long and narrow, the dwellings being along the course of an arm of the Halmund river, which in those days, before its course was shifted by moving sands, flowed there. The ruined city lies partly in Afghan, partly in Sistan territory. In many parts it is covered altogether by sand, but, by digging, houses, and in them jewellery and implements, are to be found all along."

I promised the Amir that I would go and visit Zaidan city the very next day.

When we had once begun talking, the Amir spoke most interestingly, and I was glad to obtain from him very valuable and instructive information. One hears accounts in some quarters of the Persian officials being absolutely pro-Russian and showing incivility to British subjects, but on the contrary the Amir positively went out of his way to show extreme civility. He repeatedly inquired after my health and expressed his fervent wishes that fever should no more attack me.

"What do you think of my beloved city, Sher-i-Nasry?" he exclaimed. I prudently answered that in my travels all over the world I had never seen a city like it, which was quite true.

"But you look very young to have travelled so much?" queried the Amir.

"It is merely the great pleasure of coming to pay your Excellency a visit that makes me look young!" I replied with my very best, temporarily adopted, Persian manner, at which the Amir made a deep bow and placed his hand upon his heart to show the full appreciation of the compliment.

He, too, like all Persian officials, displayed the keenest interest in the Chinese war of 1900 and the eventual end of China. He spoke bitterly of the recluse Buddhists of Tibet, and I fully endorsed his views. Then again, he told me more of historical interest about his province, and of the medical qualities of the Halmund water—which cures all evils. More elaborate compliments flowed on all sides, and numberless cups of steaming tea were gradually sipped.

Then we took our leave. As a most unusual courtesy, the Consul told me, and one meant as a great honour, the Amir came to escort us and bid us good-bye right up to the door,—the usual custom being that he rises, but does not go beyond the table at which he sits.

Out we went again through the same narrow passages, stooping so as not to knock our heads against the low door-way, and came to our horses. The soldier on guard fired another salute with his gun, and Ghul-Khan, who happened to be near at the time, nearly had his eye put out by it.

As we rode through the gate a number of prisoners—seven or eight—laden with chains round the neck and wrists and all bound together, were being led in. They salaamed us and implored for our protection, but we could do nothing. I could not help feeling very sorry for the poor devils, for the way justice is administered in Sistan, as in most parts of Persia, is not particularly attractive. The tendons of the hands or feet are cut even for small offences, hot irons are thrust into the criminal's limbs, and other such trifling punishments are inflicted if sufficient money is not forthcoming from the accused or their relations to buy them out.

Here is an example of Persian justice. While I was in bed with fever, one day Major and Mrs. Benn went for a ride along the wall of the city, with their usual escort. On reaching the city gate they saw several people come out, and they were startled by a shot being fired close by them, and a dead body was laid flat across the road. The dead man, it appeared, had been himself a murderer and had been kept in chains in the Amir's custody, pending trial. The verdict might have possibly turned in his favour had he been willing to grease the palms of the jailors, in accordance with old Persian custom; but although the man was very well off, he refused to disburse a single shai. He was therefore there and then handed over to the relations of the murdered man so that they should mete out to him what punishment they thought fit.

The man was instantly dragged through the streets of the city, and on arriving outside the city gate they shot him in the back. The body was then left in the road, the Persian crowd which had assembled round looking upon the occurrence as a great joke, and informing Major Benn that the corpse would remain there until some of his relations came to fetch it away. On referring the matter to the Governor the following day, he smilingly exclaimed: "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth!"—a quotation from the Koran that quite cleared his conscience.

This is a very common way of disposing of criminals in Persia by allowing personal revenge to take its course. Although such ways of administering justice may not command themselves to one, the moral of it as looked upon by Persian eyes is not as bad as it might at first appear. The honest, the well-to-do man, they reason, has nothing whatever to fear from anybody, and if a man chooses to be a criminal, he must take the consequences of it. The more severe the punishment the less crime there will be in the country. Persian law prevents crime.

In a province like Sistan, where the people are not quite up-to-date as in other parts of Persia, naturally, ways which to us may seem very cruel have to be applied by the Amir to impress the people. If fines to the maximum of the prisoner's purse are excepted, the usual way of satisfying the law for almost any offence, the next most common punishment is the bastinado applied on the bare soles of the feet. When an option is left to the prisoner of undergoing the bastinado or paying a fine, he generally selects the sticks, which he feels much less than the anguish of disbursing the smallest sum in cash. Minor crimes only are so punished—it is considered the lightest punishment. Occasionally it is used to obtain confessions. People are seldom known to die under it.

Disfigurement, or deprivation of essential limbs, such as one or more phalanges of fingers, or the ears or nose, is also much in vogue for thieves, house-breakers and highwaymen. For second offences of criminals so branded the whole hand or foot is cut off. Blinding, or rather, atrophizing the eyes by the application of a hot iron in front, but not touching them, such as is common all over Central Asia, is occasionally resorted to in the less civilised parts of Persia, but is not frequent now. I only saw one case of a man who had been so punished, but many are those who have the tendons of arms and legs cut—a favourite punishment which gives the most dreadfully painful appearance to those who have undergone it.

Imprisonment is considered too expensive for the Government, and is generally avoided except in the bigger cities. The prisoners have a very poor time of it, a number of them being chained close together.

To burn people or to bury them alive are severe punishments which are very seldom heard of now-a-days, but which occasionally take place in some remote districts and unknown to his Majesty the Shah, who has ever shown a tender heart and has done all in his power to suppress barbarous ways in his country; but cases of crucifixion and stoning to death have been known to have occurred not many years ago—if not as a direct punishment from officials, yet with their indirect sanction.

Strangling and decapitation are still in use, and I am told—but cannot guarantee its accuracy—that blowing criminals from guns is rarely practised now, although at one time this was a favourite Persian way of disposing of violent criminals.

A Persian official was telling me that, since these terrible punishments have been to a great extent abolished, crimes are more frequent in Persia than they were before. The same man—a very enlightened person, who had travelled in Europe—also remarked to me that had we to-day similar punishments in Europe instead of keeping criminals on the fat of the land—(I am only repeating his words)—we should not have so much crime in the country. "Your laws," he added, "protect criminals; our ways deter men and women from crime. To prevent crime, no matter in how cruel a way it is done, is surely less cruel than to show leniency and kindness to the persons who do commit crimes!"

That was one way of looking at it. Taking things all round, if blood feuds and cases of personal revenge are excepted, there is certainly less crime in Persia than in many European countries.

CHAPTER XXI

The London of the East—A city eighty-six miles long—The village of Bunjar—An ancient tower—Iskil—The *Kalanter* of Sistan—Collection of ancient jewellery from the buried city—Interesting objects—A romantic life and tragic death—A treacherous Afghan—Strained relations between the Sistan and Afghan Governors—Sand-barchans—Flat roofs and gable roofs—The pillar of Mil-i-Zaidan—A conical ice-house—The imposing fort of Zaidan—A neighbouring modern village.

THE Consul, Mrs. Benn and I, started off early one morning on horseback to inspect the ruins of the ancient London of the East, the great city of Zaidan, which in the days of its glory measured no less than eighty-six miles—from Lash Yuwain on the north to Kala-i-Fath on the South—ruins of the city being traceable the whole distance to this day, except in the portion which has been covered by the waters of the Hamun Halmund.

On the way there was little to be seen for the first four miles until we reached the village of Bunjar, the biggest trading village in Sistan and the residence of the Iman Jumeh, the next holiest man to the head priest of Sher-i-Nasrya. This village and neighbourhood supply Sher-i-Nasrya entirely with wood and very largely with food. There are many stunted trees about, all curved southwards by the wind, and much cultivated land, the ground being intersected by numerous natural and artificial water channels.

A very curious ancient tower, split in two, and the portion of another very much corroded at its base, and looking like a big mushroom, are to be seen on the south near this village. We cut across, almost due east, to Iskil, wading through several canals and channels into which our horses dived up to their saddles.

On approaching Iskil from the west one was impressed by the unusual height of some of its buildings, most of which were two-storied and had domed roofs, the domes being of much larger proportions than usual. A quadrangular tower of considerable loftiness stood prominent above the

height of all the other buildings. For a Persian village Iskil had quite a clean, fresh appearance, even from a short distance. On getting near we entered the main road—one might more accurately call it a canal—walled in on both sides and filled with water some eight or ten inches deep. Our horses waded through, and having rounded another large pond of dirty green water—such as is always found in the more prosperous villages of Persia—we came to a high wall enclosing a garden and an Andarun near the residence of the Kalantar of Sistan (Kalantar means the "bigger one"), the title taken by the head of the tribe who in by-gone days were the masters of the whole of Sistan.

The Kalantar is a large landowner, and has the contract for all the grazing tax of East Sistan. Among the villages owned by him are Iskil, Bunjar, and Kas-im-abad, the three richest in Sistan. The name of Kalantar is taken by each of the family as he succeeds to the possession of these villages, lands, and rights.

The Kalantar, previous to the one now in possession, was a man of most commanding presence, very tall and very stout—the biggest man in Sistan—and much respected by everybody. He was extremely friendly towards the English. He had planted an entire garden of English flowers and fruit at Iskil, and took the keenest interest in horticulture and agriculture. Above all, however, he was renowned for a magnificent collection of ancient seals, coins, jewellery, implements, beads, and other curiosities, of which he had amassed chests and chests full that had been dug up from the great city of Zaidan and neighbourhood. Some of the cameos were very delicately cut in hard stone, and reminded one of ancient Greek work. Symbolic representations in a circle, probably to suggest eternity, were favourite subjects of these ornamentations, such designs as a serpent biting its own tail, or three fishes biting one another's tails and forming a circle, being of frequent occurrence. So also were series of triangles and simple circles. The gold rings were most beautifully delicate and simple in design, and so were all the other ornaments, showing that the people of Zaidan had a most refined civilisation which is not to be found in Persian art of to-day. Personally, I have certainly never seen modern Persian work which in any way approached in beauty of line and execution to the articles excavated from the great city of Zaidan.

A great profusion of beads of amber, jasper, crystal, turquoise, malachite, agate, had been found in Zaidan and some that we saw were handsomely polished and cut, some were ornamented, others were made of some composition like very hard enamel. All—even the hardest crystal ones—had clean holes drilled through them.

The Kalantar had built himself a fine residence at Iskil, with huge rooms and lofty domes, and here he kept these collections. His generous nature had caused him to build a handsome guest house in front of his dwelling in order to put up and entertain his friends, native or foreign.

It was on the steps of his guest house that the last act of a terrible tragedy took place only a short time before we visited Iskil. About ten years ago, in 1891, a man called Mahomed Hussein Khan, an Afghan refugee, came to live in Bunjar, bringing with him a *sigah* wife (concubine), her mother and a child. Shortly after his arrival he left his family in Bunjar and went on a pilgrimage to Meshed. No news was received of him for a very long time, and the wife wrote to him—when her money and patience were exhausted—that if he did not return on a certain date or answer her letter she should consider herself divorced from him. He replied that she might consider herself free from the date of receipt of his letter, and requested her to send her mother in charge of his child to Meshed.

During Mahomed Hussein's absence rumour says that Kalantar Mir-Abbas had an intrigue with the lady, and on receipt of her husband's letter from Meshed he forcibly removed her from Bunjar and compelled her to marry him, Mir-Abbas, at Iskil.

Unluckily, the lady was a Suni and Kalantar Mir-Abbas was a Shia, which made it difficult to overcome certain religious obstacles. Such a union would anyhow be greatly resented by relations on both sides. In fact, about a year ago, 1900, the lady's brother, a native of Girisk, near Kandahar, enraged at his sister marrying a man who was not an Afghan, and of a different persuasion, came to Iskil with characteristically treacherous Afghan ways and sought service with the Kalantar, assuring him of the great affection and devotion he entertained towards him. The good-hearted Kalantar immediately gave him employment and treated him most generously.

On the night of September 19th, 1901, the Kalantar had been entertaining some friends in the Durbar building opposite his residence, among whom was the Afghan, who left the room before Mir-Abbas and went to conceal himself in the darkness at the entrance. When the Kalantar was joyfully descending the steps after the pleasant night assembly, the treacherous Afghan attacked him and, placing his rifle to Mir-Abbas' head, shot him dead. The assassin then endeavoured to enter the Andarun to kill his sister, but the lady, having her suspicions, had barricaded herself in, and an alarm being given he had to make his escape across the Afghan frontier only a few miles distant from Iskil.

It was rumoured that the murderer had been sheltered by the Afghan Governor of the Chikansur district, who goes by the grand name of *Akhunzada*, or "The great man of a high family." The Governor of Sistan, angered at the infamous deed, demanded the extradition of the assassin, but it was refused, with the result that the Afghan official was next accused of screening the murderer. There was much interchange of furious correspondence and threats between the Persian and Afghan Governors, and their relations became so strained that a fight seemed imminent.

The shrewd Afghan then offered to allow five Persian soldiers, accompanied by twenty Afghans, to search his district—an offer which was very prudently declined. Persian and Afghan soldiers were posted in some force on both sides of the river—forming the frontier—and devoted their time to insulting one another; but when I left Sistan in January, 1902, although the relations were still much strained, the affair of the Kalantar, which seemed at one time likely to turn into a national quarrel, was gradually being settled on somewhat less martial lines.

The death of such a good, honest man has been much regretted in Sistan, and great hopes are now built on his son and successor, a young fellow much resembling his father both in personal appearance and kindliness towards his neighbours.

We next came to a second and smaller village four miles further on—after having waded through numberless water-channels, ponds and pools and our horses having performed some feats of balancing on bridges two feet wide or even less. Some of these structures were so shaky that the horses were not inclined to go over them except after considerable urging.

The country between was flat and uninteresting, except that here and there some low mounds had formed where the sand blown by the N.N.W. wind had been arrested by some obstacle, such as a shrub of camel-thorn or tamarisk. Most of these sand-barchans had a striking peculiarity. They were semi-spherical except to the S.S.E., where a section of the sphere was missing, which left a vacuum in the shape of a perfect crescent.

By the numberless waves on the sand surface it seemed evident that the sand had accumulated from the N.N.W. side.

The village was small and miserable, with a few scraggy trees bowing low, like all trees of Sistan, towards the S.S.E., owing to the severe, N.N.W. winds. Here instead of the everlasting domes, flat roofs were again visible—wood being, no doubt, available close at hand. More curious, however, were actual gable roofs, the first I had noticed in Persia in purely native houses. The ventilating apertures were not in the roof itself, as in the domed houses, but in the walls, which were of a much greater height than in the domed habitations. The doors and windows were invariably on the south wall, but to the north at the lower portion of the roof in each house one could observe a triangular, projecting structure, usually in the centre of the upper wall. This was a different type of wind-catcher, but in winter blocked up with sun-dried bricks and mud.

Between this village and Zaidan there was again a good deal of water to be crossed, and in some spots it was so deep that our horses sank into it up to their chests and we had to lie flat, with our legs resting on the animals' backs, to escape a ducking.

To our left—to the north—could be seen in the distance a high tower, which is said to have a spiral staircase inside, and must be of very great height, as even from where we were—eight miles away—it rose very high above the horizon, some 70 feet, as we guessed, and looked very big. This tower stood alone several miles to the North of the principal Zaidan ruins for which we were steering, and I had not therefore time to visit it.

The pillar is locally called Mil-i-Zaidan, and is circular in shape, made of kiln-baked bricks cemented together by clay. On the summit, above a broad band with ornate decorations and a much worn inscription can be seen the fragments of two smaller structures, also cylindrical, which may have been the supports of the dome of the minaret. There is said to be another illegible inscription about thirty feet from the ground.

According to Goldsmid, who visited this place in 1872, the tower then stood on a square foundation, and its circumference was 55 feet at the base and only 28 feet at the summit. The lower portion of the tower, as seen through powerful glasses, seemed very much corroded, and it will not be long before it collapses. There are various theories regarding this tower, which now rises directly above the flat desert. It is said by some to be one of a number of isolated watch towers, but this, I think, is incorrect.



THE CITADEL OF ZAIDAN, THE GREAT CITY.

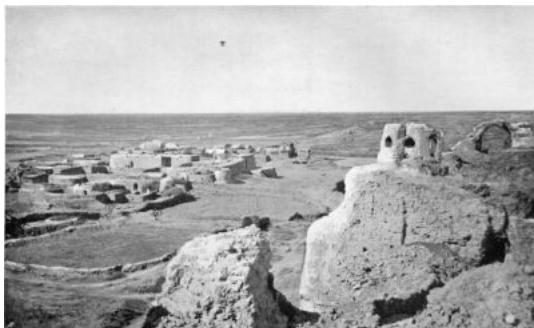
According to Major Sykes, who quotes from the Seljuk history: "Every three hundred paces a pillar twice the height of a man was built and two *minars* between Gurz and Fahraj, one forty *gaz* high, the other twenty-five, and *under* each *minar* a caravanserai and a tank." By the word "under" the historian evidently meant directly underneath the tower—which was the customary way of constructing such buildings. The *minars* seldom rose from the ground, but were and are generally constructed on the roofs of buildings. A proof that this was the case in this particular instance was that when Goldsmid visited it in 1872, he stated that it "was built on a square foundation."

The caravanserai underneath this tower and the tank are evidently buried by the sand, as is the case with a great portion of the City of Zaidan. That there is underneath the sand a city connecting the southern portion of Zaidan—still partly above ground—with the northern portion of Zaidan, and that this *minar* rises above buried habitations, there can be little doubt, for all along the several miles of intervening sandy stretch the earth is covered with debris, ruins and fragments of tiles, bricks, &c., &c., showing the remains of a great city.

As we went along, leaving the pillar to the north and steering south-east for the main ruins of Zaidan, we saw close by on the north a very large structure forming the section of a cone—the lower portion buried in sand and the upper portion having collapsed,—which a Sistani who accompanied us said was an ancient ice-house. This theory may be correct, for it is probable that the climate of Sistan may have greatly changed; but it is also possible that the structure may have been a large flour-mill, for to this day mills are built in Persia on similar exterior lines to the ice-houses. Structures of the same kind are also to be observed as far south as Kala-i-Fath, the southern terminus of the great city.

No ice to speak of can be collected nowadays, either in Sistan or within a very large radius of country, and snow is seldom, almost never seen.

Near this mill or ice-house, whichever it was, another high building in ruins was to be observed, but I could not afford the time to deviate from my route and inspect it. It appeared like a watch-tower, and was not dissimilar to two other round towers we had seen before on the south,—very likely they were all outer fire-signalling stations, so common all over Asia.



THE ZAIDAN WEST TOWERS AND MODERN VILLAGE.

After a brisk ride of some four hours we arrived at the main portion of the ruins of Zaidan—an imposing fort on a clay hill, which must have formed the citadel. At the foot of the hill was the modern village of Zaidan—about fifty houses, some with flat, others with gabled, roofs, such as we had seen at the previous villages, and a few with domed roofs. There were a few cultivated fields in which wheat was raised.

CHAPTER XXII

An ancient city as big as London—The citadel—Towers—Small rooms—The walls—Imminence of the city—Sand drifts—Why some parts are buried and some are not—An extensive wall—Great length of the city—Evidence that the habitations were continuous—The so-called Rud-i-Nasru—Its position—A double outer wall—A protected road—Interesting structures—An immense graveyard—Tombs—Sand drifts explained—A former gate of the city—The *Chil-pir* or tomb of forty saints—Interesting objects found—Beautiful inscriptions on marble and slate—Marble columns—Graceful lamps—Exciting digging—A tablet—Heptagonal tower—A ghastly figure.

As we approached the ruins we could not help being impressed by their grandeur. They were certainly the most imposing I had so far come across in Persia. The high walls and towers of the fort could be seen from a great distance, and for the benefit of my readers a photograph is reproduced in this book to show how the citadel of this great city appeared as one drew near it from the west. The photograph was taken half a mile away from the fortress.

We entered the citadel by a short incline on the northern side of the main fort and found ourselves in a huge court, the sides of which were much blocked towards the wall by sand drifts. Contrary to what has been stated by others, the citadel is not inhabited to-day, nor are there any signs of its having been inhabited probably for a great many years. There is nothing whatever to be seen in the centre of this yard, which is covered with accumulated sand far above its original level, and at the sides, too, of the court, where buildings would have very likely been, everything is smothered in sand up to a great height of the wall. In other places the wall has collapsed altogether.



TOWERS OF THE CITADEL, ZAIDAN.

Remains of small rooms high up near the top of the wall can be seen. The inside of the inner fort enclosed by the highest wall is quadrangular, and has ten towers round it, eight of which are still in wonderful preservation considering their age. Those at the angles of the quadrangle had large, somewhat elongated, windows ending in a point cut into them in two tiers, as may be seen in the illustration. Curiously enough, while the windows were six feet in height, the doors were never more than five feet. There were rooms in all the towers, but all were extremely small. The largest averaged eight feet square. The walls of the towers were of mud bricks with layers of kiln-baked bricks, and were three to four feet deep and of very great strength.

As can be seen by the illustration, a fragment of an archway was to be found on the summit of the wall and there were often signs that a covered passage, such as may be found in other northern forts of this great city, must have been in existence when the place was in all its glory.

As one stood on the highest point of the wall and looked around one got a fair idea of the former immensity of the city. It evidently stretched from south-east to north, forming an obtuse angle at the citadel on which I stood. To the south-east of the fortress, where sheltered from the terrific north winds and from the sand drifts, the ruins were in better preservation and less covered with sand, which here indeed made quite a depression, while the northern aspect now displays a continuous mass of fine sand interrupted only by some of the higher buildings projecting above it.

One could distinguish quite plainly where the wall of the city continued for a long distance to the south-east with occasional towers, but this portion of the wall, as seen in the illustration facing page 208, is now in a sad state of decay and fast being covered with sand. The first three hundred yards of it, which are the best preserved, however, will show what a place of great strength Zaidan must have been. The towers appear to have been enormous, as shown by the base of the nearer one in the foreground of the photograph, and also by the second one, a portion of which still remained standing.

The city boundary made a detour to the south-east at the third tower, all the buildings visible being on the east of the wall and none to the west. The modern village of Zaidan should, of course, be excepted.

There seems to have been a great space intervening between this wall and the nearest habitations, but why that was would now be difficult to ascertain except by digging to a considerable depth. It seems hardly likely that a moat with water should have been constructed on the inside of the fortress, although at first sight one might be led to conclude that this was the case.



S.E. PORTION OF ZAIDAN CITY, showing how it disappears under distant sand accumulations.



DOUBLE WALL AND CIRCULAR UNROOFED STRUCTURES, ZAIDAN. In the distance high sand accumulations above City.

The city does not seem to have had a great general breadth, and is mostly remarkable for its enormous length, although at several of the most important points it has indeed considerable width. It extended mostly like a long line, and one could still perceive, as far as the eye could see, partially destroyed domed roofs, fragments of walls, and in some cases entire structures still standing and bearing roofs. The ice-house, which we had passed on the way, stood prominent to the north by north-west and also the pillar, the *minar* of Mil-i-Zaidan.

Major Sykes makes a very quaint statement in the *Geographical Journal* for February, 1902. He says: "I have seen it stated by previous travellers" (presumably Sir F. Goldsmid and Bellew) "that the ruins of Zaidan extend for fourteen miles, but the fact is that *there were villages lining the Rud-i-Nasru throughout its length* (a length of 30 miles according to Major Sykes's maps), and these have been mistaken for suburbs of the capital of Sistan."

It seems to me that Major Sykes has only strengthened the contention of previous travellers and that, whether one calls them suburbs or a continuity of habitations, villages, or by any other name, the fact is that continuous miles of buildings can be traced. The Rud-i-Nasru canal, according to Major Sykes's own maps as given in the *Geographical Society's Journal*, is over 30 miles in length, and if the 30 miles are lined *throughout* by villages surely that fact further establishes the continuity of the city.

Personally, however, I have my doubts whether Major Sykes is correct in placing the Rud-i-Nasru to the west of the city in Zaidan's days of glory. There are signs of a canal, but to the east of the city. The Hamun, too, I think, no more stretched across from east to west in the northern portion than it does to-day, but rather formed two separate lakes—the eastern one fed by the surplus water of the Halmund; the western filled by the Farah Rud. The space between is liable to be occasionally flooded by the excess of water in these two lakes, but that is all.

All the evidence goes to show that the great city, under different local names, extended continuously northwards as far as Lash Yuwain, passing between the two marshy lakes. In the next chapter I have

brought undoubted evidence pointing to that conclusion, and if any one is still sceptical about it, all he has to do is to go there and see for himself. In such a dry climate the ruins, although gradually being covered over with sand, will remain long enough for any one wishing to spend some time there and to make a thorough study of them.

To the east of the Zaidan fort, about 100 yards and 200 yards respectively, are the remains, still fairly well preserved, of a high double wall, castellated and with loop-holes half-way up the wall. These two walls, where free from sand, stand some 40 feet high, but in most portions the sand has accumulated to a height of 15 to 20 feet.

These parallel walls were somewhat puzzling. They were only a few feet apart and protected a road between them which went from north-west to south-east. Each wall was constructed very strongly of two brick walls filled between with beaten earth. The lower portion of the wall was much corroded by the wind and sand, but the upper part where it had not collapsed, was in good preservation. There were rows of holes at the bottom on the east side, where there appeared to have been extensive stables with mangers for horses. The lower portion of the wall was of kiln-baked bricks, and the upper part in horizontal layers of baked bricks every four feet and mud bricks between.

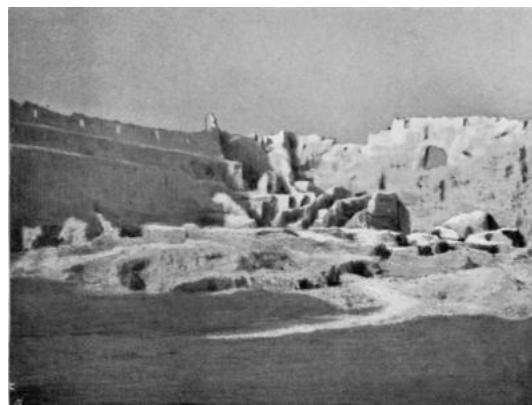
Of the two parallel walls the eastern one was not castellated, but the western or inner had a castellated summit. There was an outer moat or canal.

Only a comparatively small portion of this double wall stood up to its former height—merely a few hundred feet of it—but traces could be seen that it must have extended for a very long distance. It appeared to be tortuous and not in a straight line, its direction being plainly traceable even in the photograph reproduced in the illustration facing page 208. Only one tower of a quadrangular shape could be seen along this wall, and the apertures in the wall were at regular intervals of four feet. The doorway in these walls appeared to have been next to the quadrangular tower, which was very likely constructed in order to guard the gate.

There were small circular unroofed structures between the fort itself and this double wall, but they appeared more like the upper sections of towers than actual habitations. Though much smaller and lower they bore all the architectural characteristics of the towers of the greater fort, and possessed windows, one above the other, similar to those we had found in the larger towers of the main fort. In the illustration the reader can see for himself. That a considerable portion of this structure is buried is shown by the fact that the upper portion of a window is just visible above the sand in the circular building to the left of the observer. These structures had in the interior some elaborately moulded recesses, and ornamented windows in pointed arches. The circular building had three rooms on the floor still above ground and six small recesses. One window was in most excellent preservation.

Further on, beyond the double wall to the south-east, was a most extensive graveyard, a portion of which had been freed from sand by the natives of the modern village of Zaidan. There were hundreds and hundreds of tombs, some in quite good preservation, as can be seen by the two photographs facing pages 212 and 214.

The photograph facing page 212 shows the eastern portion of the graveyard where some of the tombs were altogether free from sand, and in a splendid state of preservation. They were made of kiln-burnt bricks plastered over with mud, the body, it may be remarked, being enclosed in these rectangular brick cases and entirely above ground. They were mostly single tombs, not compound graves, like some which we shall inspect later on (Mount) Kuh-i-Kwajah. Their measurements were about 7 feet by 4 feet by 3½ feet, and they were extremely simple, except that the upper face was ornamented by a series of superposed rectangles diminishing in size upwards and each of the thickness of one brick, and the last surmounted generally by a prism.



INTERIOR OF ZAIDAN FORTRESS.



GRAVEYARD OF ZAIDAN CITY.

The photograph facing page 214 shows the north-western portion of the graveyard, with the entire eastern aspect of the Zaidan fortress. I took this photograph for the special purpose of proving how high the sand has accumulated over many portions of the graveyard, as well as over a great portion of the city. The particular spot where I took the photograph was somewhat protected from the north, hence the low depression, slightly more free from sand than further back where the sand, as can be seen, was able to settle down to a great height. The upper portions of several graves can be noticed mostly buried in sand, and by the ripples on the sand and the casting of the shadows (the photograph was taken in the afternoon when the sun was west) it can be seen plainly that the sand has accumulated from the north.

Under the immediate lee of the fortress and of the outer walls, similar depressions in the sand were found, and it is owing to these that some portion of the city was still uncovered by sand.

In the photograph facing page 214 it may be noticed that where the lee of the high fortress no longer protects the buildings from the drifting sand, the city gradually disappears, as it were, under fairly high accumulations.

We shall find later, on our journey to the Beluchistan frontier, how these sand accumulations, in their turn, forming themselves into barriers against the sands which came from the north, allowed further southerly portions of the city to escape unburied, which portions can be seen extending in and out of these transverse sand ridges as far south as Kala-i-Fath. North of the Zaidan fortress the sand, finding no high obstacles, has accumulated to a much greater height, only very lofty buildings remaining visible above the surface.

In the photograph facing page 206 this high cushion, as it were, of sand can plainly be seen over the north of the city beyond the tower of the castle; also a portion of the small canal at the foot of the tower, which some will have it was the Rud-i-Nasru.

In the distance towards the south-east, two quadrangular towers could be seen, which the Katkhuda of Zaidan village told us formed part of one of the former gates of the city. These two towers can be seen in the background of the photograph facing page 212.

Some distance beyond the graveyard we came to a section of a tower, heptagonal in form, which had just been dug out to a depth of 4 feet by the natives of the village of Zaidan. The Katkhuda—who could have given points to an Irishman—told us that this was the tomb of the renowned legendary "Forty Saints of Zaidan," and added, that they numbered forty-four! On being asked why it was called the tomb of the forty saints if their number was forty-four, he did not lose his presence of mind, but explained that four had been added afterwards when this sacred spot had already received its legendary name.



EAST VIEW OF THE ZAIDAN CITADEL.

For a very long time the Zaidan people had searched for this sacred spot, and they seemed very proud to have discovered it. It is called by them *Chil-pir*, or the "forty saints." As the tower is not large enough to contain them all, a number of them are said to be buried in the immediate neighbourhood to the south and west of the structure, and the Katkhuda, to prove his words, showed us some three graves, more elaborate than the rest. There were also others that were anxiously searched for, but had not been located yet.

The graves which I was shown were entirely of kiln-burnt bricks, and so was the wall of the tower itself, as can be seen by a portion of it showing in the illustration facing page 218, behind the marble inscription and columns.

Since its discovery the natives had made this into a *Ziarat* or shrine, and on its western side (towards Mecca) had adorned it with a bundle of sticks, horns, and a number of rags, or pieces of ribbon, white, red or blue. Every Mussulman visiting it leaves an offering of a piece of cloth generally from his coat or turban, if a man, or from the chudder or other feminine wearing apparel if a woman.

The Katkhuda told us that a great many things had been found in digging near here, but the more valuable ones had disappeared, sold to officials or rich people of Sistan. A great many seals, coins, stone weapons, lamps and pottery had been found, the latter often glazed. Innumerable fragments of earthenware were strewn everywhere round about these ruins, some with interesting ornamentations, generally blue on white ground. The "parallel lines" and "heart pattern" were common, while on some fragments of tiles could be seen quotations from the Koran in ancient Arabic. Some pieces of tiles exhibited a very handsome blue glaze, and on some plates the three leaf pattern, almost like a *fleur-de-lis*, was attempted, in company with the two-leaf and some unidentified flower.

Most interesting of all were the beautiful inscriptions on stone and marble, recently been found in the tomb of the Forty Saints. Some had already been covered again by the sand, but we dug them out afresh and I photographed them. They were in fair preservation. They bore Arabic characters, and were apparently dedicated in most laudatory terms, one to "the Pomp of the country, Sun of righteousness and religion, and the founder of a mosque"; the other commemorated the death of a great Amir. As, however, there appears to be some difficulty in deciphering some of the very ancient characters I will refrain from giving any translation of them for fear of being inaccurate. The photographs given of them facing pages 218, 220, 222, are, however, quite clear enough for any one interested in the matter to decipher them for himself.

These tablets were most artistic and beautifully carved, and one had a most charming ornamentation of two sprays of flowers in each of the two upper corners. The second inscription had much more minute writing on it, and was of a finer design and cut, but was, unfortunately, rather worn. It had evidently been subjected to a long period of friction—apparently by sand. The natives had made a sort of altar with this last inscription and some cylindrical sections of columns carved out of beautiful marble, white or most delicately variegated.

There were also various other large pieces of marble and stone, which had evidently formed part of a very fine and rich building, as well as a very ancient fragment of a red baked earthenware water-pipe. Many of the pieces of marble in the heap contained ornamentations such as successions of the heart pattern, graceful curve scrolls suggesting leaves, and also regular leaf patterns. One stone was absolutely spherical, like a cannon ball, and quite smooth; and some stone implements, such as a conical brown hammer and a pestle, were very interesting.

On the white marble columns stood two charming little oil lamps, of a most graceful shape, in green earthenware, and in digging we were fortunate enough to find a third, which is now in my possession. They can be seen in the illustration (facing page [218](#)), although I fear not at their best, being so small. They were not unlike the old Pompeian lamps in shape, and certainly quite as graceful. The wick used to be lighted at the spout.

Among other fragments was the capital of a pillar, and portions of Koran inscriptions. As we dug excitedly with our hands in the sand we found other inscriptions on slate and on grey-stone, of one of which I took an impression on paper. It seemed much more ancient than the others and had a most beautiful design on it of curves and flowers.

A tablet at the entrance of the tomb of the Forty Saints was not of marble but of slate carved. It bore the following date: **١٢٨٢** which I believe corresponds to 1282. The heptagonal tower had two entrances, one to the north, the other to the south, but was, unfortunately, getting smothered in sand again.

We became greatly excited on discovering the inscriptions, and pulled up our sleeves and proceeded in due haste to dig again in the sand—a process which, although much dryer, reminded one very forcibly of one's younger days at the seaside. Our efforts were somewhat cooled by a ghastly white marble figure which we dug up, and which had such a sneering expression on its countenance that it set the natives all round shrieking with laughter.



THE FIGURE WE DUG OUT AT ZAIDAN.



Arabic Inscription and marble columns with earthenware lamps upon them. Fragment of water-pipe. Stone implements. Brick wall of the "Tombs of Forty Saints" showing in top corners of photograph.

We thought we had better leave off. Moreover, the natives who had accompanied us seemed rather upset at my photographing and digging, and now that I had got what I wanted I did not care to make them feel more uneasy than was necessary. I had exhausted all the photographic plates I had brought out with me, night was coming on fast, and we had twenty miles to ride back. On my last plate I photographed our last find, which is reproduced for the benefit of my readers facing page [218](#).

This ugly head, with a very elongated and much expanded nose and a vicious mouth full of teeth, had been carved at the end of a piece of marble one and a half feet high. The head, with its oblique eyes, was well polished, but the remainder of the marble beyond the ears, which were just indicated by the artist, was roughly cut and appeared to have been made with the intention of being inserted into a wall, leaving the head to project outside. Its flat forehead, too, would lead to the conclusion that it had been so shaped to act as a support, very likely to some tablet, or moulding of the mosque.

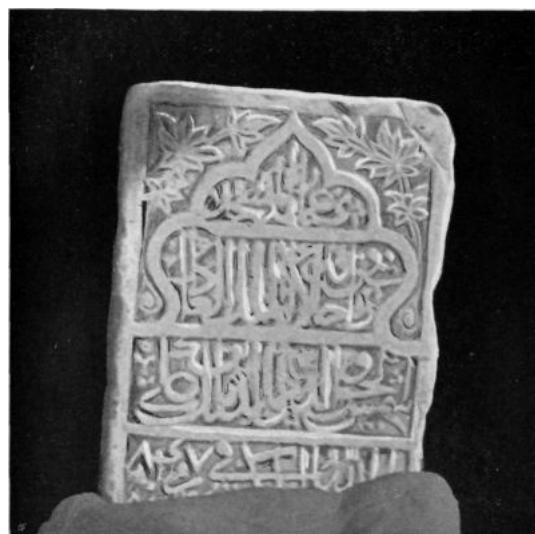
The Katkhuda said that it was a very ancient god, but its age was not easy to ascertain on so short an acquaintance. It certainly seemed very much more ancient than anything else we had found and

CHAPTER XXIII

A short historical sketch of Zaidan city—How it was pillaged and destroyed—Fortresses and citadels—Taimur Lang—Shah Rukh—Revolutions—The Safavi dynasty—Peshawaran, Pulki, Deshtak—Sir F. Goldsmid's and Bellew's impressions—The extent of the Peshawaran ruins—Arabic inscriptions—A curious ornamentation—Mosques and *mihrab*—Tomb of Saiyid Ikbal—The Farah Rud and Harut Rud—The "Band" of the Halmund—Canals and channels old and new of the Halmund delta—The Rud-i-Nasru and the Rud-i-Perian—Strange temporary graves—Ancient prosperity of Eastern Persia.

It is not for me to go fully into the history of this great city of Zaidan, for so much of it rests on speculation and confused traditions that I would rather leave this work to some scientist of a more gambling disposition than my own; but now that I have described what I myself saw I will add a few historical details which seem correct, and the opinions of one or two other travellers in that region which add interest to the place as well as strengthen my statements. With the many photographs which I took and which are reproduced in this book, I hope that a fair idea of the place will be conveyed to the reader.

The following short historical notes were furnished to me by the Katkhuda (or head village man) of the present village near the Zaidan ruins. I reproduce them verbatim, without assuming any responsibility for the accuracy of the historical dates, but the information about the great city itself I found to be correct.



ARABIC INSCRIPTION ON MARBLE DUG BY AUTHOR AT THE CITY OF ZAIDAN.

When Shah Rukh Shah was ruler of Turkistan, and one Malek Kutuh-ud-din was ruler of Sistan and Kain, Shah Rukh Shah was engaged in settling disturbances in the northern part of his dominions, and Malek Kutuh-ud-din, taking advantage of it, attacked Herat and plundered it. Shah Rukh Shah, hearing of this, collected an army and marched on Sistan. During this march he devastated the country, which was then very fertile and wealthy, and captured and dispersed the inhabitants of the endless city of Zaidan—which extended from Kala-i-Fath, to the south (now in Afghan territory on the present bank of the Halmund), to Lash Yuwain on the north (also in Afghan territory on the bank of the Farah Rud), a distance, according to the Trigonometrical Survey Maps, of 86 miles as the crow flies. This would agree with the account given me by the Amir of the extent of the city.

The city of Zaidan was protected by a large fortress at every six farsakhs (24 miles). Each fortress was said to be strongly garrisoned with troops, and had a high watch tower in the centre similar to that which I saw at a distance on the north-east of Iskil, and which has been described in previous pages.

Another historical version attributes the destruction of Zaidan and adjoining cities to Taimur Lang (Tamerlane) or Taimur the lame (A.H. 736-785), father of Shah Rukh whose barbarous soldiery, as some traditions will have it, were alone responsible for the pillage of Zaidan city and the devastation of all Sistan. The name of Taimur Lang is to this day held in terror by the natives of Sistan.

But whether Zaidan was devastated twice, or whether the two accounts apply to the same disaster, it is not easy to ascertain at so distant a date. There are obvious signs all over Eastern Sistan that the country must have undergone great trouble and changes—probably under the rule of Shah Rukh and his successors (A.H. 853-873), after which revolutions seem to have been rampant for some sixty years, until Shah Ismail Safavi conquered Khorassan and the neighbouring countries, founding a powerful dynasty which reigned up to the year A.H. 1135.

Under the Safavi dynasty Sistan seems to have been vested in the Kayani Maliks, who are believed to be descendants of the royal house of Kai. (I came across a village chief claiming to be the descendant of these Kayani rulers.)

To return to the Zaidan ruins, as seen to-day from the highest point of the citadel wall, the ruined city stretches in a curve from north to south-east. It is to the south-east that the ruins are less covered with sand and in better preservation, the citadel standing about half way between its former north and southern termini. There is every evidence to show that the present extensive ruins of Peshawaran to the north, Pulki, Deshtak (Doshak described by Bellew) and Nad-i-Ali were at one epoch merely

a continuation of Zaidan the great city, just as Westminster, South Kensington, Hammersmith, &c., are the continuation of London, and make it to-day the largest conglomeration of houses in the world. It was evidently necessary to subdivide such an enormous place into districts.



Transfer of Inscription dated 1282, found in the "Tomb of Forty Saints," Zaidan.



Transfer of Ornament above four lines of Koran on Grave Stone.



Transfer of Ornamentations on Marble Grave.



PRESUMED SUMMITS OF TOWERS BURIED IN SAND, ZAIDAN.
Notice top of Castellated Wall behind.

Bellew, who visited the ruins in 1872, speaks of Zaidan as "extending as far as the eye can reach to the north-east, and said to be continuous with the ruins of Doshak (Deshtak), about nine miles from the Halmund. These ruins, with those of Pulki, Nadali and Peshawaran, are the most extensive in Sistan, and mark the sites of populous cities, the like of which are not to be found at this present day in all this region between the Indus and the Tigris."

Doshak or Deshtak is situated about fourteen miles south by south-east of Sher-i-Nasrya, on the right bank of the main canal which extended from the Halmund towards the west. It was a large walled town, with towers and a square fort in the centre. Deshtak is said to have been the residence and capital of the first member of the Safavi dynasty in Sistan, which, like all other cities of Sistan, was pillaged and razed to the ground by the terrible Taimur Lang. On its ruins rose the smaller city of some 500 houses which we have mentioned—also called Jalalabad—and which eventually became the seat of Bahram Khan, the last of the Kayani chiefs. The city was built by him for his son Jalaludin, after whom it was named. Jalaludin, however, was expelled from the throne, and from that date the Kayani family ceased to reign in Sistan.

Pulki was also located on this main canal, east of Deshtak, and Peshawaran was situated due north of Zaidan. They consist of an immense extent of ruins. Both Sir F. Goldsmid and Bellew, who travelled in that part testify to the whole country between Jalalabad, Buri-i-Afghan and Peshawaran being covered with ruins.

The ruins at Peshawaran I was not able to visit, they being in Afghan territory—now forbidden to Englishmen—and, being the guest of the British Consul, I did not wish to cause trouble. Sir F. Goldsmid, who visited them during the Perso-Afghan Frontier Mission, describes them as covering a great area and being strongly built of alternate layers of sun-burnt and baked brick. The ruins of a madrassah, with a mosque and a *mihrab*, were most extensive, and had traces of ornamentations, and an inscription, said to be Kufic. The walls of the citadel were (in 1872) in fairly good repair. "The citadel," Sir F. Goldsmid relates, "was of a circular form, somewhat irregular in shape, with a diameter of from two to three hundred yards. The walls are about fifty feet high, built strongly of baked brick, with a species of arched covered gallery, five feet high and five feet wide, running round the summit of the ramparts."

A very similar arrangement was to be seen on the Zaidan fort, as can be noticed in the photograph which I took and which is reproduced in the full page illustration (facing page [206](#)).

"Two massive round towers guard the gateway approached by a narrow steep ascent. In the centre of the fort on a mound stood a superior house, probably the residence of the Governor. To the south,[\[6\]](#) dense drifts of sand run to the summits of the ramparts."

If these drifts can rise so high on the high wall of the citadel, it is certain that a great many of the smaller buildings must be rather deep under the sand level by now, but that they are there, there can be little doubt, for fragments of tiles, bricks, vases, &c., strew the ground. No doubt the usual critic will wonder how it is that, if the houses are buried, these fragments are not buried also. The wind principally is responsible for their keeping on the surface of the sand. They are constantly shifted and are blown from place to place, until arrested by some obstacle such as a wall, where a great number of these fragments can generally be found collected by the wind.

"The great characteristic of these ruins"—continues Sir F. Goldsmid—"is the number of accurately constructed arches which still remain, and which are seen in almost every house, and the remains of strongly built windmills, with a vertical axis, as is usually the case in Sistan."

This again, as we have seen, is also one of the characteristics of the Zaidan buildings.

The ruins of Peshawaran are subdivided into several groups, such as the Kol Marut, Saliyan, three miles east of the fort, Khushabad, Kalah-i-Mallahun, Nikara-Khanah, &c.

Bellew, who camped at Saliyan, describes this section of the ruins "which cover many square miles of country, with readily distinguishable mosques and colleges (madrassahs), and the Arabic inscriptions traceable on the façades of some of the principal buildings clearly refer their date to the period of the Arab conquest, and further, as is evidenced by the domes and arches forming the roofs of the houses, that then, as now, the country was devoid of timber fit for building purposes. The most remarkable characteristic of these ruins is their vast extent and excellent preservation."

I, too, am of Bellew's opinion about these points. The several inscriptions I found at Zaidan, photographs of which I have given in this book, were, as we have seen, in Arabic; the ornamentations of which I took tracings were Arabic in character.

Bellew reckons the great extent of the Peshawaran section of the ruins as covering an area of about six miles by eight. He states that they were the outgrowths of successive cities rising on the ruins of their predecessors upon the same spot, and, like the other few travellers who have intelligently examined the ruins, came to the conclusion that in point of architecture and age the whole length from Lash Yuwain to the north to Kala-i-Fath to the south, and including Peshawaran, Zaidan and Kali-i-Fath were absolutely identical.

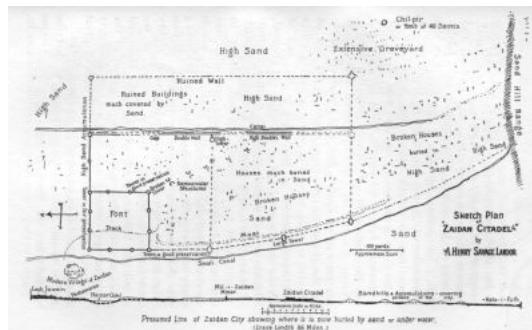
Goldsmid supplies information similar to Bellew's regarding the Peshawaran ruins, and he writes that on his march north to Lash Yuwain he had to go three or four miles to the west on account of the ruins. He speaks of seeing a place of worship with a *mihrab*, and, curiously enough, on the wall above it he found "the masonic star of five points surrounded by a circle and with a round cup between each of the points and another in the centre." He also saw the tomb of Saiyid Ikbal, also mentioned by another traveller, Christie.

Eight miles west by north-west from the ruins rises a flat-topped plateau-like hill, called the Kuh-i-Kuchah, not dissimilar in shape to the Kuh-i-Kwajah to the south-west of Sher-i-Nasrya. Four villages are found near it. To the east of it is found the Farah Rud, and to its west the Harut Rud,—two rivers losing themselves (when they have any water in them) into the lagoon. The Harut is not always flowing. To the south is the Naizar lagoon forming part of the Hamun-Halmund. (This lagoon was mostly dry when I went through.) It has formed a huge lake at various epochs, but now only the northern portion, skirting the southern edge of the Peshawaran ruins, has any permanent water in it, and is principally fed by the delta of canals and by the overflow of the Halmund, over the Band, a kind of barrage.

Some explanation is necessary to make things clear.

On the present Afghan-Perso boundary, at a place called the "Band-i-Sistan," is the great dam across the Halmund, completely turning the waters of the stream, by means of semi-artificial canals, for the irrigation of Sistan. Hence the fertility of that district. The dam, "the Band," as it is called by the natives, is a barrier slightly over 700 feet long, constructed of upright wooden stakes holding in position horizontal fascines of tamarisk interwoven, strengthened by stones and plastered with mud to form a semi-solid wall. In olden days the Band was so feebly constructed that it was generally carried away every year at the spring floods, but now greater attention is given to its construction and it is kept in fairly good repair, although portions of it usually collapse or are carried away by the force of the current during the floods. The height of the Band is not more than eighteen or twenty feet. Practically the actual river course comes to an end at this Band, and from this point its waters are spread into a delta of canals, large and small, subdivided into hundreds other tortuous channels. The Hussein Ki Canal is one of the most important, and feeds Zaidan, Iskil, Bunjar and Sher-i-Nasrya, Husseinabad, and other places, and is subdivided into minor channels during its course. It flows roughly in a north-west direction.

In 1896, according to Major Sykes (*Royal Geographical Society's Journal*), a new canal, known as the Rud-i-Perian, was formed, and destroyed Jahanabad, Ibrahimabad and Jalalabad. This canal, he says, is not far from the Rud-i-Nasru, which he seems to think was at one time the main stream and flowed in a natural bed past Zaidan to the west of it, but personally I have my doubts about the accuracy of this statement. I believe that the Rud-i-Nasru was merely a shallow canal that passed to the west of Zaidan, but that the river course of the Halmund itself was always to the east of Zaidan as well as of the other adjoining cities north of Zaidan. The Canal to the east of Nad-i-Ali is no doubt a naturally cut channel, the obvious continuation under natural circumstances of the river course. The same remark might apply to the small channel self-cut to the west of that place. There are other important channels, such as the Madar-Ab, which supplies water to Chiling, Pulki and Sekhuka; the Kimak canal and the Kasimabad. Before the present dam was constructed some eighty years ago, a previous "Band" existed, as we shall see, further up the course of the Halmund to the south, and secured the irrigation of the southern portion of Sistan, which is now absolutely dry and barren. Dried up canal beds of great length are still to be found in southern Sistan.



Sketch Plan of "ZAI DAN CITADEL"

by

A. HENRY SAVAGE LANDOR.

It would be a great undertaking to describe accurately all these canals and the various positions they have occupied at different epochs, and the task would at best be most thankless and useless, for, with the exception of the larger ones, the minor ones keep constantly changing their course by cutting themselves new beds in the soft soil. Anybody who has visited eastern Sistan, even in a very dry season, as I did, knows too well how the ground is intersected in all directions by myriads of natural water channels, all fed by the Halmund, so that, unless one had months of time at one's disposal, it would hardly be possible to map them all out exactly.

During flood time the water flows over the Band and into its natural channel due north up into the Hamun, where it loses itself.

There is a good deal of verdure, trees, and high reeds near the banks of the river at the Band, with many snakes, while fish is plentiful in the water and myriads of wild fowl are to be seen.

Curious conical temporary graves of mud can occasionally be seen, some six feet high, the body being, it is said, buried standing within these cones previous to proper interment with due ceremony. On the outside, clear imprints made while the mud was still soft of several sized hands—presumably of the deceased's relations or friends—were left on the surface of the cone, the imprints being one above the other in a line.

Among the ruins of Peshawaran, Bellew found traces of several canals, now dry, one of which, however, had been restored by the chief of Hokat and brought a stream of good water up to the Silyan ruins for irrigation purposes.

As for the southern end of the great city at Kala-i-Fath, we have very good accounts from Ferrier, Goldsmid, and Bellew, all testifying to its great extent. Here, too, there is a strong citadel standing on an artificial mound, and seeming to have been repaired some twenty-five or thirty years ago. Bellew says that the ruins extend over several miles of country, and Goldsmid speaks of a circumference of ruins of some two and a half miles at Kala-i-Fath, with a large citadel and fine arched buildings within. He mentions spacious courtyards and the remains of reservoirs, caravanserais, and large buildings in abundance, but no vestige of anything approaching magnificence.

This, however, is the case with everything Persian, whether ancient or modern, especially in regard to architecture, and a great deal of the humbleness of the buildings is, I think, due to the facts that the inhabitants of Persia are nomads by nature; that the shifting sands drive people from their homes; that rivers constantly alter their courses, and that the water supply is a constant source of difficulty in most parts of Iran; moreover the terrible wars and invasions made the natives disinclined to construct themselves very elaborate houses which they might at any moment have to abandon.

These reasons account for the extraordinary number of abandoned villages, towns, fortresses, and whole ruined suburbs of towns all over Persia, a sight which I think cannot be seen on such a large scale in any other country in the world.

At Kala-i-Fath the question of the water may not have been the principal one, but the fear of constant attacks must have deterred the natives from erecting magnificent buildings. Or else how could we account for these enormous fortresses which are found all along to protect the great city?

Goldsmid describes a fine caravanserai at Kala-i-Fath, built of large baked bricks, each brick eleven inches square, and displaying a nicety of design foreign to Sistan. The caravanserai seems to have been domed over a large central courtyard, with wings for rooms and stabling; and an adjoining ice-house of mud bricks. In the graveyard fragments of alabaster and tiles were found.

The wall round the city which Goldsmid describes—six feet at the base tapering to one foot at the summit—is somewhat different in character from that of Zaidan, and is, to my mind, of much later construction, as are many of the buildings.

"Some of the streets," he says, "which all run from east to west, are in excellent preservation and as if they were of recent construction."

It is quite possible, in fact, very probable, that this portion of the great city—which, by the bye, is said to have been the last capital of the Kayani Kings, and was deserted by them when attacked by Nadir Shah—has, owing to its favourable geographical position on the east bank of the Halmund, been inhabited to a certain extent until a much later date. The local accounts, at least, would point to that conclusion.

A dry canal exists, which we shall cross on our way to the Beluchistan frontier; it is fed by the Halmund, north of Kala-i-Fath, and strikes across the plain in a westerly direction.

If all the accounts given by people who have been there are taken into consideration, together with the photographs here given, which seem to me to show that the place was one of unusual grandeur; if the fact is grasped that, whether considered as a single city or a conglomeration of adjoining successive cities, Zaidan was undoubtedly a continuous and uninterrupted row of houses of no less than eighty-six miles; I think that whatever theories may be expounded by the usual scientific speculator at home, the fact must remain that this ancient London of Asia marks a period of astounding prosperity in the history of Eastern Persia.

FOOTNOTES:

[6] I think this must be a mistake; it should be to the north.—A.H.S.L.

CHAPTER XXIV

Departure from Sistan—Dadi—Not one's idea of a pasture—The Kuh-i-Kwajah—Its altitude—The "City of roars of laughter"—Interesting ascent to the summit—A water reservoir—Family graves—Dead-houses—A grave with thirty-eight compartments—The Gandun Piran Ziarat—Scrolls and inscriptions—Priest's house—Modern graves—Skulls and their characteristics—A smaller Ziarat—The Kuk fort—A bird's-eye view of Kala-i-Kakaha city—Strange legends about the city—Why Kala-i-Kakaha is famous.

OWING to the tender care of Major and Mrs. Benn I was, at the beginning of 1902, in a fair condition of strength to undertake the journey of 600 miles on camels across Northern Beluchistan to Quetta. With the help of Major Benn I made up a fresh caravan entirely of running camels, and expected therefore to be able to travel very fast. The camels selected were excellent, and the two Beluch drivers who came with me most faithful, considerate and excellent servants. Sadek also accompanied me.

Everything was made ready to start by January 2nd, but some hitch or other occurred daily, and it was not till January 10th that I was able to take my departure—sorry indeed to say good-bye to my new good friends, Major and Mrs. Benn, to whose charmingly thoughtful care I altogether owed it that I was now able to proceed in good health.

The hour of our departure was fixed for 5 o'clock A.M., but my three cats, suspecting that we were going to move from our comfortable quarters, disappeared during the night, and some hours were wasted by Sadek and all the servants of the Consulate in trying to find them again. I was determined not to start without them. Sadek was furious, the camel men impatient, the guard of Lancers sent by the Consul to accompany me for some distance had been ready on their horses for a long time, and everybody at hand was calling out "Puss, puss, puss!" in the most endearing tones of voice, and searching every possible nook.

After four hours of expressive language in Persian, Hindustani, Beluchi and English, at nine o'clock the cats were eventually discovered. One had hidden under a huge pile of wood, all of which we had to remove to get him out; the second had found a most comfortable sanctum in Mrs. Benn's room, and the third, having ascertained that his companions had been discovered, walked out unconcerned and entered the travelling box of his own accord.

I was sorry to leave Sistan too, with its ancient ruins, its peculiar inhabitants, a mixture of all kinds, its quaint city, so strikingly picturesque especially at sunset, when, owing to the moisture in the air, beautiful warm colours appeared in the sky, and the thousands of camels, and sheep, moving like so many phantoms in clouds of dust, returned to their homes. The sad dingling of their bells sounded musical enough in the distance, and one saw horsemen dashing full gallop towards the city before the gates were closed, every man carrying a gun. Far to the west in the background stood the Kuh-i-Kwajah mountain, so famous in the history of Sistan. All this after the dreary, long Salt Desert journey had seemed heavenly to me, and I was more than sorry to leave the place.

Had I been a Russian instead of an Englishman I would not have continued my journey on the morning of my departure, for on coming out of the Consulate gate the first thing I saw was a dead body being washed and prepared for interment by relatives in the dead-house adjoining the Consulate wall. The Russians believe the sight of a dead body an ill-omen at the beginning of a journey.

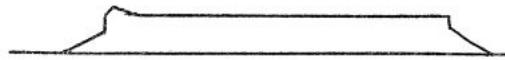
Gul Khan, the Consul's assistant, accompanied me as far as the Kuh-i-Kwajah mountain, to inspect which I had to make a detour.

We passed south of Sher-i-Nasrya, and, after wading through numberless water channels and skirting large pools of water, crossed a tiny anonymous village of six domed huts, and then came to a very large one rejoicing in the name of Dadi. My fast camels carrying loads had gone ahead, and we, who had started later on horses, caught them up some sixteen miles onward, where there was a third little village, the inhabitants of which were wild-looking and unkempt. The women and children stampeded at our approach. The houses were flat-topped and were no taller than seven feet, except the house of the head village man which was two-storeyed and had a domed roof.

When the Hamun Halmund extended as far south as Kandak the Kuh-i-Kwajah mountain was an island, but now the whole country around it is dry except some small swamps and pools, on the edges of which thousands of sheep could be seen grazing. It took a very powerful sight indeed to see what the animals were grazing on. One's idea of a pasture—we always picture a pasture for sheep as green—was certainly not fulfilled, and after a minute inspection one saw the poor brutes feeding on tiny stumps of dried grass, yellowish in colour and hardly distinguishable from the sand on which it grew in clusters not more than half an inch high.

Where the Hamun had been its bed was now of a whitish colour from salt deposits.

The Kuh-i-Kwajah (mountain), occasionally also called Kuh-i-Rustum, rising as it does directly from the flat, is most attractive and interesting, more particularly because of its elongated shape and its flat top, which gives it quite a unique appearance. Seen from the east, it stretches for about three miles and a half or even four at its base, is 900 feet high, and about three miles on top of the plateau. The summit, even when the beholder is only half a mile away from it, appears like a flat straight line against the sky-line, a great boulder that stands up higher on the south-west being the only interruption to this uniformity. The black rocky sides of the mountain are very precipitous—in fact, almost perpendicular at the upper portion, but the lower part has accumulations of clay, mud and sand extending in a gentle slope. In fact, roughly speaking, the silhouette of the mountain has the appearance of the section of an inverted soup-plate.

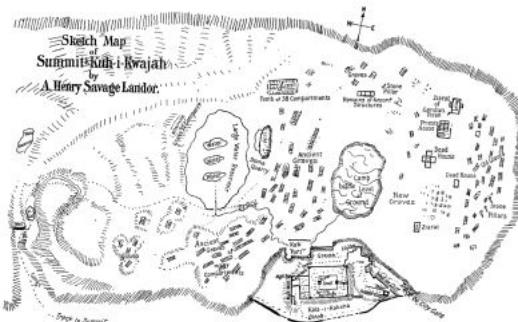


SILHOUETTE OF KUH-I-KWAJAH.

Major Sykes, in the *Royal Geographical Society's Journal*, describes this mountain as resembling in shape "an apple," but surely if there ever was anything in the world that had no resemblance whatever to "an apple" it was this mountain. It would be curious to know what Major Sykes calls "an apple."

The diagram here appended of the outline of the mountain, and indeed the photograph given by Major Sykes in the *Royal Geographical Society's Journal*, February, 1902, page 143, will, I think, be sufficient to convince the least observant on this point. Major Sykes is also no less than 500 feet out in his estimate of the height of the hill. The summit is 900 feet above the plain—not 400 feet as stated by him.

The altitude at the base is 2,050 feet, and at the summit 2,950 feet. As we rounded the mountain to the southward to find a place at which we could climb to the top, we saw a very ancient fort perched on the summit of the mountain commanding the ruins of Kala-i-Kakaha, or the "city of roars of laughter"—a quaint and picturesque city built on the steep slope of the south escarpment of the mountain.



Sketch Map
of Summit of Kuh-i-Kwajah
by A. Henry Savage Landor.

In the centre of this city was a large and high quadrangular wall like a citadel, and it had houses all round it, as can be seen by the bird's-eye view photograph I took of it from the fort above, a view from which high point of vantage will be described at the end of this chapter.

We went along the outer wall of the city on a level with the plain at the hill's base, but we abandoned it as this wall went up the mountain side to the north. Some high columns could be seen, which appeared to have formed part of a high tower. The sides of the hill on which the city was built were very precipitous, but a steep tortuous track existed, leading to the city on the east side, the two gates of the city being situated—one north-east, the other north-west—in the rear of the city, and, as it were, facing the mountain side behind. On the south-west side high accumulations of sand formed an extensive tongue projecting very far out into the plain.

The rocky upper portion of the Kuh-i-Kwajah mountain was black towards the east, but getting yellowish in the southern part, where there were high sand accumulations up to about three-quarters of the height of the mountain, with deep channels cut into them by water.

We came to a narrow gorge which divides the mountain in two, and by which along a very stony path between high vertical rocks the summit of the table mountain could be reached. We left our horses in charge of a lancer and Mahammed Azin, the head village man of Deh-i-Husena—a man who said he was a descendant of the Kayani family, and who professed to know everything about everything,—Gul Khan and I gradually climbed to the higher part of the mountain. I say "gradually" because there was a great deal to interest and puzzle one on the way up.

This path to the summit had been formerly strongly fortified. Shortly after entering the gorge, where we had dismounted, was a strange wall cut in the hard, flint-like rock by a very sharp, pointed instrument. One could still distinctly see the narrow grooves made by it. Then there were curious heads of the same rock with side hollows that looked as if caused by the constant friction or some horizontal wooden or stone implement. I was much puzzled by these and could not come to a definite conclusion of what could have been their use. Even our guide's universal knowledge ran

short; he offered no explanation beyond telling me that they had been made by man, which I had long before discovered for myself.

A small reservoir for rain-water was found near this spot, and nearly at the top of the hillock a ditch had been excavated near the easiest point of access, and another ditch could be seen all round. The low land round the mountain has most certainly been inundated at various epochs, forming a shallow, temporary swamp, but not a permanent lake as has been asserted by some, and from what one saw one was tempted to believe that the plain around Kuh-i-Kwajah must have been drier in the days of its glory than it has been in this century.



DEAD HOUSES AND ZIARAT ON KUH-I-KWAJAH.



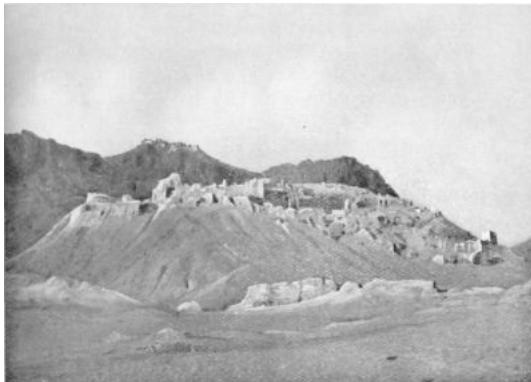
A FAMILY TOMB (EIGHT COMPARTMENTS) ON KUH-I-KWAJAH.

On reaching the summit we found ourselves on an undulating plateau covered with graves, but these graves, unlike all others which I had seen in Persia, had not only the characteristic points of the Zaidan ones in which the body was encased in the tomb above the level of the ground, but were in compartments and contained whole families. The first grave we examined was made of huge boulders and was six yards long, four yards wide and had four sections, each occupied by a skeleton and covered over with flat slabs of stone. Each compartment was about $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet high, $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet broad, and 6 feet long. Near this family grave was a quarry of good stone from which stones for grinding wheat, hand-mortars, &c., had been cut. At the foot was a reservoir for rain-water.

One was rather surprised on reaching the summit of Kuh-i-Kwajah to find it so undulating, for on approaching the mountain from the plain one was specially impressed by its straight upper outlines against the sky. The summit is actually concave, like a basin, with numerous hillocks all round, and one portion, judging by sediments left, would appear to have contained a lake. In the centre of the plateau are two extensive artificial camps dug into the earth and rock, and having stone sides. On a hillock to the west of one of these ponds stands a tomb with no less than ten graves side by side.

From this point eastwards, however, is the most interesting portion of this curious plateau. Numerous groups of graves are to be seen at every few yards, and two dead-houses, one with a large dome partly collapsed on the north side, the other still in the most perfect state of preservation. The photograph facing page 240 gives a good idea of them. The larger and more important dead-house had a central hall $4\frac{1}{2}$ yards square, and each side of the square had an outer wing, each with one door and one window above it. Each wing projected three yards from the central hall. To the east in the central hall there was a very greasy stone, that looked as if some oily substance had been deposited on it, possibly something used in preparing the dead. Next to it was a vessel for water.

Outside, all round the walls of this dead-house, and radiating in all directions, were graves, all above ground and as close together as was possible to construct them, while on the hillocks to the south of the dead-houses were hundreds of compartments for the dead, some in perfect condition, others fallen through; some showing evident signs of having been broken through by sacrilegious hands—very likely in search of treasure.



KALA-I-KAKHA, THE "CITY OF ROARS OF LAUGHTER."



THE "GANDUN PIRAN" ZIARAT ON KUH-I-KWAJAH.

On the top of a hillock higher than the others was a tomb of thirty-eight sections, all occupied. A lot of large stones were heaped on the top of this important spot, and surmounting all and planted firmly in them was a slender upright stone pillar 6½ feet high. It had no inscription upon it nor any sign of any kind, and had been roughly chipped off into an elongated shape. Near this grave, which was the most extensive of its kind that I had observed on the plateau, was a very peculiar ruined house with four rooms, each four yards square, and each room with two doors, and all the rooms communicating. It was badly damaged. Its shape was most unusual.

We then proceeded to the Ziarat, a pilgrimage place famous all over Persia and south-western Afghanistan. I was fortunate enough to take a good photograph of its exterior (see opposite), which will represent its appearance to the reader better than a description. A high rectangular building plastered all over with mud, a front arch or alcove giving access to a small door, and two domed low stone buildings, one on either side, and another ruined building with a wall around it behind the Ziarat. A few yards to the left of the entrance as one looked at it was a coarse upright stone pillar.

The inside of the Ziarat was more interesting than the outside. It was a very large whitewashed single room, with high vaulted ceiling, and in the centre rose from the floor to a height of three feet a gigantic tomb, six yards in length, with a gabled top. It measured one yard and a half across at the head, and one yard at its foot, and had two stone pillars some five feet high standing one at each extremity. To these two end pillars was tied a rope, from which hung numberless rags, strips of cloth and hair. Behind the head of the tomb along the wall stretched a platform four and a half feet wide, on which rested two brass candlesticks of primitive shape, a much-used kalyan, and a great number of rags of all sizes, ages, and degrees of dirt.

The scrolls and inscriptions on the wall were very quaint, primitive representations of animals in couples, male and female, being the most indulged in by the pilgrims. Goats and dogs seemed favourite subjects for portrayal.



MALE AND FEMALE GOATS.

DOG.

A lock of human hair and another of goat's hair hung on the wall to the right of the entrance, and on two sticks laid across, another mass of rags, white, blue, yellow and red. Hundreds more were strewn upon the ground, and the cross bars of the four windows of the Ziarat were also choke-full of these cloth offerings. Among other curious things noticeable on the altar platform were a number of stones scooped into water-vessels.

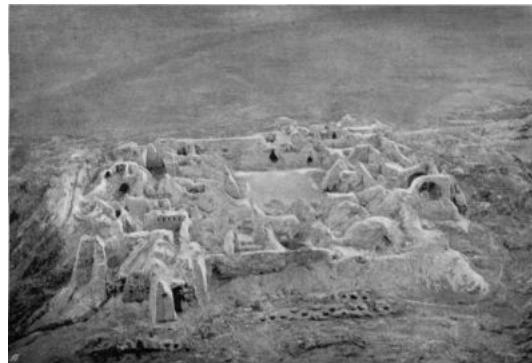
This Ziarat goes by the name of Gandun Piran, and is said to be some centuries old. In the spring equinox pilgrimages are made to this Ziarat from the neighbouring city and villages, when offerings of wheat are contributed that the donor may be at peace with the gods and expect plentiful crops. These pilgrimages take very much the form of our "day's outing on a Bank Holiday," and sports of various kinds are indulged in by the horsemen. It is the custom of devout people when visiting these Ziarats to place a stone on the tomb, a white one, if obtainable, and we shall find this curious custom extending all over Beluchistan and, I believe, into a great portion of Afghanistan.

Directly in front of the Ziarat was the priests' house, with massive, broad stone walls and nine rooms. The ceilings, fallen through in most rooms, were not semi-spherical as usual but semi-cylindrical, as could still be seen very plainly in the better-preserved one of the central room. This house had a separate building behind for stables and an outer oven for baking bread. The dwelling was secluded by a wall.

The top of Kuh-i-Kwajah is even now a favourite spot for people to be laid to their eternal rest, and near this Ziarat were to be found a great many graves which were quite modern. These modern tombs, more elaborate than the old ones, rose to about five feet above the ground, had a mud and stone perforated balustrade above them all round, and three steps by which the upper part could be reached. They seldom, however, had more than three bodies in each tomb.

We found on the ground a very curious large hollowed stone like a big mortar, which seemed very ancient. Then further were more old graves in rows of five, six, eight, and more. When one peeped into the broken ones, the temptation to take home some of the bleached skulls to add to the collection of one's national museum, and to let scientists speculate on their exact age, was great. But I have a horror of desecrating graves. I took one out—a most beautifully preserved specimen—meaning to overcome my scruples, but after going some distance with it wrapped up in my handkerchief I was seized with remorse, and I had to go and lay it back again in the same spot where it had for centuries lain undisturbed.

I examined several skulls that were in good condition, and the following were their principal characteristics. They possessed abnormally broad cheek-bones, and the forehead was very slanting backwards and was extremely narrow across the temples and broad at its highest portion. The back portion of the skull, in which the animal qualities of the brain are said by phrenologists to reside, was also abnormally developed, when compared to European skulls. The top section (above an imaginary plane intersecting it horizontally above the ear) was well formed, except that in the back part there was a strange deep depression on the right side of the skull, and an abnormal development on the left side. This peculiarity was common to a great many skulls, and was their most marked characteristic. Evidently the brains of the people who owned them must have constantly been working on a particular line which caused this development more than that of other portions of the skull.



A BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF KALA-I-KAKAHA, THE "CITY OF ROARS OF LAUGHTER."

The upper jaw was rather contracted and mean as compared to the remaining characteristics of the skull, slanting very far forwards where it ended into quite a small curve in which the front teeth were set. The teeth themselves were extremely powerful and healthy. The bumps behind the ear channels were well marked.

The whole skull, however, as seen from above, was more fully developed on its right side than on the left; also the same abnormal development on the right side could be noticed under the skull at the sides, where it joins the spinal column. In a general way these skulls reminded one of the formation of the skulls of the present Beluch.

Another smaller Ziarat partly ruined was to be found south of the one we had inspected, the tomb itself being of less gigantic proportions, and now almost entirely buried in sand. The two end pillars, however, remained standing upright, the northern one being, nevertheless, broken in half. The door of this Ziarat was to the south of the building, and had a window above it. The walls had a stone foundation, some 2 feet high, above which the remainder of the wall was entirely of mud, with a perforated window to the west. The tomb itself was 8 feet long by 4 feet wide. A small square receptacle was cut in the northern wall.

We had now come to the Kuk fort above the city of Kala-i-Kakaha on the south of the mountain. With the exception of a large round tower, 40 feet in diameter at the base, there remained very little to be seen of this strong-hold. Sections of other minor towers and a wall existed, but all was a confused mass of debris, sand and mud.

From this point a splendid view was obtained of the city of Kala-i-Kakaha just below, of which a photograph from this bird's eye aspect will be found facing p. 246 of this volume. There was an extensive courtyard in the centre enclosed by a high wall, and having a tower in the centre of each of the two sides of the quadrangle. A belt of buildings was enclosed between this high wall and a second wall, which had two towers, one at each angle looking north towards the cliff of the mountain from which we observed. Outside this wall two rows of what, from our high point of vantage, appeared to be graves could be seen, while to the east were other buildings and cliff dwellings extending almost to the bottom of the hill, where a tower marked the limit of the city.

From this point a tortuous track could be seen along the gorge winding its way to the city gate, the only opening in the high third wall, most irregularly built along the precipice of the ravine. At the foot of the mountain this wall turned a sharp corner, and describing roughly a semicircle protected the city also to the west.

At the most north-westerly point there seemed to be the principal gate of the city, with a massive high tower and with a road encased between two high walls leading to it. The semicircle formed by the mountain behind, which was of a most precipitous nature, was enclosed at its mouth by a fourth outer wall, with an inner ditch, making the fortress of Kala-i-Kakaha practically impregnable.

The legend about Kala-i-Kakaha city furnished me by the Sar-tip, through Gul Khan, was very interesting.

In ancient days there was in that city a deep well, the abode of certain godly virgins, to whom people went from far and near for blessings. Visitors used to stand listening near the well, and if their

prayers were accepted the virgins laughed heartily, whereby the city gained the name of Kaka-ha (roar of laughter). Silence on the part of the sanctimonious maidens was a sign that the prayers were not granted.

The Sistan historical authorities seem to think this origin of the name plausible. There were, however, other amusing, if less reliable legends, such as the one our friend Mahommed Azin gave me, which is too quaint to be omitted.

"In the time of Alexander the Great," he told us, "Aristotles the famous had produced an animal which he had placed in a fort" (*which* fort Mahommed Azin seemed rather vague about). "Whoever gazed upon the animal was seized with such convulsions of laughter that he could not stop until he died.

"When Alexander was 'in the West' (*i.e. maghreb zemin*)" continued Mahommed Azin, "he had seen this wonderful 'animal of laughter' produced by Aristotles, and some seventy or eighty thousand soldiers had actually died of laughter which they could not repress on seeing it. Plato only, who was a wise man, devised a ruse to overcome the terrible effects of looking at the animal. He brought with him a looking-glass which he placed in front of the brute, and, sure enough, the demon, which had caused the hilarious death of many others, in its turn was seized by hysterical laughing at itself, and of course could not stop and died too."

Mahommed Azin was somewhat uncertain whether the animal itself had resided in the fortress of the Kuh-i-Kwajah mountain, or whether the owner of the animal had visited the place, or whether the place had been named merely in honour of the legend of the "animal of laughter." All I can say is that when Mahommed, with a grave face, had finished his inimitable story, Gul Khan and I were also seized with such uncontrollable fits of hilarity that, notwithstanding our mournful surroundings of graves and dead-houses, we, too, very nearly went to swell the number of victims of Mahommed Azin's "animal of laughter," although without the pleasure of having made its personal acquaintance.

Mahommed Azin positively finished us up when he gravely added that it was most dangerous to recount the legend he had told us for he had known people die of laughter by merely listening to it. There was some truth in that. We nearly did, not only at the story but at the story-teller himself!

Kala-i-Kakaha is a famous spot in Persian history, for it is said that the great Persian hero Rustam's first exploit was to capture this city and slay its king *Kuk*, after whom the fort standing above Kakaha is named. In more modern days Kakaha, which, from ancient times, had been a place of shelter for retreating princes hard driven by the enemy, has become noteworthy for its seven years' resistance to the attacks of Nadir's troops, when the Kayani King Malik-Fath, having abandoned his capital, Kala-i-Fath had taken refuge in the impregnable city of Kala-i-Kakaha.

CHAPTER XXV

Villages between Sher-i-Nasrya and Kuh-i-Kwajah—The last of the Kayani—Husena Baba—Thousands of sheep—The Patang Kuh—Protecting black walls—A marsh—Sand dunes—Warmal—Quaint terraces—How roofs are built—A spacious residence built for nine shillings—Facial characteristics of natives—Bread making—Semi-spherical sand mounts—Natural protections against the northerly winds.

We were benighted on the mountain and did not reach the village of Deh-i-Husena till nearly nine o'clock, our friend and guide having lost his way in the dark and having taken us round the country for a good many more miles than was necessary. It is true the night was rather black and it was not easy to see where the low mud-houses of his village were.

The distance in a direct line from Deh-i-Husena to the foot of the Kuh-i-Kwajah mountain was 4 miles, and the village of Deh-i-Husena was about 15 miles from Sher-i-Nasrya, the village of Dadi we had passed being 9 miles off, and Sanchuli 14½ miles from the city and only a quarter of a mile from Deh-i-Husena. To the south of the latter village was Deh-i-Ali-Akabar.

We spent the night at Deh-i-Husena, Mahommed Azin, the head village man and guide, being so entertaining in his conversation that he kept us up till all hours of the morning. He professed to be one of the only two surviving members of the Kayani family which formerly reigned over Sistan, his cousin being the other. According to his words—which, however, could not always claim to be models of accuracy—his family had a good deal of power in Sistan up to about forty years ago (1860). They were now very poor.

Mahommed Azin had well-cut features and bore himself like a man of superior birth, but he was very bitter in his speech against fate and things in general. It was, nevertheless, wonderful how a man, living in a small village secluded from everybody and everywhere, had heard of flying machines, of submarine boats, of balloons that *ferenghis* made. His ideas of them were rather amusing, but he was very intelligent and quick at grasping how they worked when I explained to him. Surgery interested him intensely, and after that politics. The Ruski and Inglis he was sure would have a great deal of trouble over Sistan. He could not quite make up his mind as to which was the bigger nation. When he heard Ruski's accounts of themselves he certainly thought the Ruski were the greater people, but when he listened to the Inglis and what they could do he really believed they must be stronger.

"Who do you think is the most powerful?" he inquired of me.

"Of course, the Inglis, without doubt."

"Then do you think that your king will grant me a pension, so that I can live in luxury and without working to the end of my days?"

"The king does not usually grant pensions to lazy people. Pensions are granted to people who have done work for the country."

"Well then, you see," exclaimed Mahommed Azin, in thorough unreasonable Persian fashion, "you say your king is greater than the Ruski king, and he would not grant me a pension, I the last of the Kayanis!" He was sure the Ruski potentate would at once if he knew!

I left Husena at 9.30 A.M. on January 11th, striking south for Warmal. There were a good many wretched villages in succession half a mile or so apart from one another, such as Dubna, Hasan-Jafa, Luftulla and Husena Baba. The ground was covered with white salt which resembled snow.

Husena Baba was quite a large and important village. The inhabitants came out in great force to greet us. Although wood was extremely scarce at this village, nearly all the houses had flat roofs supported on rough rafters. Matting on a layer of reeds prevented the upper coating of mud from falling through. I came across several horses laden with bundles of long reeds which they dragged behind them, and which they had carried, probably from the Naizar, where they were plentiful.

We had altered our course from south to east, and here I parted with useful Gul Khan and the escort, who had to return to the Consulate. I mounted my riding camel and started off, this time south-east, on my way to Warmal.

Again we saw thousands of sheep grazing on the flat desert of dried mud and salt cracked in innumerable places by the sun. Here and there a close examination showed tiny tufts of dried grass, some two inches in circumference, and not more than half an inch tall, and at an average distance of about ten feet from one another. It was astounding to me that so many animals could find sufficient nourishment for subsistence on so scanty a diet, but although not very fat the sheep seemed to be in pretty good condition.

To the west we had a high ridge of mountains—the Patang Kuh—and between these mountains and our track in the distance an extensive marsh could be distinguished, with high reeds in profusion near its humid banks.

To the east some miles off were Dolehtabad (village), then Tuti and Sakawa, near Lutok.

South-east before us, and stretching for several miles, a flat-topped plateau rose to no very great height above the horizon, otherwise everything was flat and uninteresting all around us. Some very curious walls of black mud mixed with organic matter, built to shelter sheep from the fierce north winds while proceeding from one village to another, can be seen in the *lut*. These black dashes on the white expanse of salt and sand have about the same effect on the picturesqueness of the scenery as coarse scrawls with a blunt pen on a fine page of *calligraphy*. You see them here and there, scattered about, all facing north, like so many black dashes in the otherwise delicate tones of grey and white of the soil.

When we had gone some miles on this flat, hard stretch of ground, where the heat was terrible, we had to make a detour round a large marsh. Then beyond it stood five parallel banks of sand, 25 feet high, with horizontal layers of half-formed stone up to half the height of the dunes. The dunes were about 200 yards apart.

In the afternoon we arrived at Warmal, where water seemed plentiful and good. Here too, as in the centre of most villages and towns of Persia, a pond of stagnant filthy water could be seen. The pond at Warmal was of unusually ample proportions and extended through the whole length of the village, which was built on both sides of this dirty pond. Numerous canals branched off from this main reservoir, and in fact, had one had a little imagination, one might have named this place the Venice of Sistan. At sunset swarms of mosquitoes rose buzzing from the putrid water, but from a picturesque point of view the effect of the buildings reflected in the yellow-greenish water was quite pretty.

To facilitate transit from one side of the village to the other, a primitive bridge of earth had been constructed across the pond, but as the central portion of it was under water it was necessary to remove one's foot-gear in order to make use of the convenience.

Characteristic of Warmal were the quaint balconies or terraces, in shape either quadrangular or rectangular, that were attached to or in close proximity of each house. They were raised platforms of mud from 2 to 4 feet above the ground, with a balustrade of sun-burnt bricks. On these terraces the natives seek refuge during the summer nights to avoid being suffocated by the stifling heat inside their houses.

A difference in the construction and architecture of some of the roofs of the houses could be noted here. The roofs were oblong instead of perfectly circular, and when one examined how the bricks were laid it seemed extraordinary that the vaults stood up at all. These were the only roofs in Persia I had seen constructed on this particular principle.

The bricks were laid round the vaults for two-thirds of the roof at an angle of 45° and the other third in a vertical position. There was the usual upper central aperture and occasionally one or two side ones.

The natives were very civil and obliging, and as usual they all crowded round to converse.

"Sahib," said one old man, "you must come to settle here."

"Why should I settle here?"

"It is very cheap to build houses at Warmal."

"How much does it cost to build a house?"

"Come and see and you will tell me whether you can build a house cheaper in your country."

He took me to a spacious new residence, 14 feet by 14 feet inside, and 18 feet high.

"It is a fine house, is it not, Sahib?"

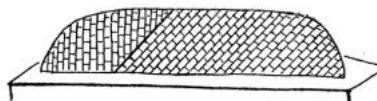
"Yes, very fine."

"It cost me exactly two tomans, four krans (about nine shillings) to build it, as it stands."

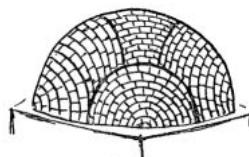
Enumerating the various items of expenditure on the tips of his fingers:—"Sun-baked bricks 1 kran (5d.) per thousand," he continued; "carpenter 1 kran a day for 5 days, and mason 1 kran a day. The people who helped were not paid as they were relations!"

The dome of this house was very scientifically constructed, as can be seen by the diagram, and formed a very strong vault. To make these vaults, four workmen begin at the four corners of the

quadrangular base to lay bricks in successively enlarging concentric arcs of a circle, each higher than the previous one, till each section meets the two side ones. The small portion that remains above is filled in with bricks, laid transversely, and these vaults are really of remarkable strength.



Vault, shewing how Bricks are laid.



Semi-Spherical Roof, shewing how Bricks are laid.

I have seen some built on this principle, and several centuries old, standing in good preservation and as good as new.

The type of natives was quite different again from that in other places already visited, and was most interesting. The men, like most men of the desert, had elongated faces, with long, regular noses, slightly convex and somewhat drooping. The nostrils were rather swollen and lacking character, and not sharply cut. At the bridge the nose was very narrow, but broad in its lower portion and quite rounded, which looked better in profile than full face. The nostrils drooped considerably towards the point of the nose and were high up where joining the cheek. The faces of these fellows formed a long smooth oval with no marked cheek-bones and vivid, dark, intelligent eyes, small but well-open, showing the entire iris. The lips were the most defective part of their faces, being unduly prominent, thick and coarsely-shaped.

The hair grew in a very normal way on their faces, and they possessed very good arched eyebrows, slightly coarse but well-defined, and in most cases meeting at the root of the nose. In fully-formed men the beard was thick and curly, but did not grow to any great length. On the skull the hair was jet-black and was soaked in oil, so that it had the appearance of being perfectly straight.

Ample trousers, the usual long shirt and Afghan boots (which are not unlike European military boots), made up the attire of the masculine members of the community.

The women had, on a smaller scale, very similar features to those of the men, and at a distance their oval faces appeared quite handsome, but on a closer inspection the lineaments were much too elongated to be attractive. They had a somewhat pulled appearance. Both men and women were tall, slender and of very wiry build.

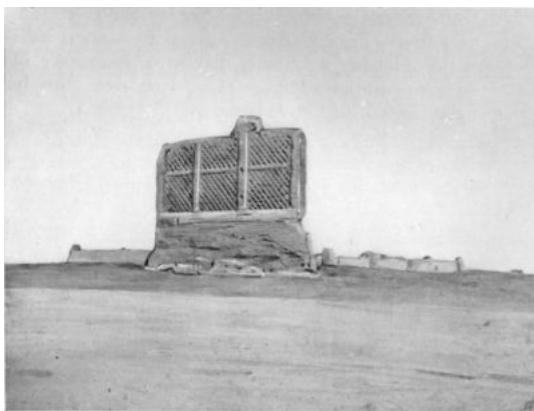
After sunset the women, with their heads wrapped up in a sort of white chudder, thrown gracefully behind the shoulders and reaching down to the feet, began to prowl about in a great state of excitement, carrying big balls of flour paste and small wicker work plates, like shields, covered over by a cloth. They lighted a big fire in one of the small domed ovens, and after beating the paste on the wicker shields till it had spread into a thin layer, they quickly took it up with their hands and, kneeling over the blazing furnace, stuck the paste against the roof of the oven. They used long leather gloves for the purpose. While being baked the bread was constantly sprinkled with water from a bowl close at hand.

Nearly each house has its own outer oven, but the one I was near seemed to be used by several families, judging by a string of clamouring women who impatiently—and did they not let the others know how impatiently!—waited with all necessaries in hand to bake bread for their men. The respective husbands and sons squatted around on their heels, languidly smoking their pipes and urging their women to be quick. A deal of good-natured chaff seemed to take place during this daily operation, but the women were quite in earnest and took themselves and the process very seriously. They seemed much concerned if one piece got too much burnt or another not enough.

To the east by south-east of Warmal, about a mile and a half off, were four semi-spherical sand mounts standing prominent against the sky-line, and a great number of sand hills of confused formation. The several sand-banks which I had observed in the morning on our march to this place extended to a great length towards the east, and were a great protection to Warmal against the periodic northerly winds of the summer. Hence the lack here of the familiar wind-catchers and wind-protectors, found further north, the sight of which one missed on the roof tops after having become accustomed to Sher-i-Nasrya and adjoining villages where no roof was without one. Here there were only one or two wind-catchers visible on the roofs of the few two-storeyed houses of the richer folks.



SHER-I-RUSTAM. (Rustam's City.)



THE STABLE OF RUSTAM'S LEGENDARY HORSE.

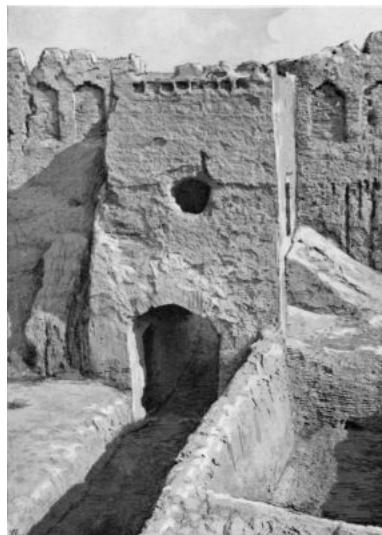
Another characteristic of dwellings in Warmal was that over each front door there was a neat little fowl-house, subdivided into a number of square compartments. The place was simply swarming with chickens.

CHAPTER XXVI

Sand accumulations—A round tower—Mahammed Raza Chah—A burial ground—Rustam's city—An ancient canal—Rustam's house—The Persian hero's favourite room—A store room—Reception hall—The city wall—Where Rustam's son was impaled—The stable of Rustam's gigantic horse—More dry canals—An immense graveyard—Sand and its ways—A probable buried city—A land-mark—Sadek's ways—A glorious sunset—Girdi—Beluch greeting.

WARMAL (altitude 2,100 feet) was left at 8 A.M. on the 12th. We skirted extensive sand accumulations, high to the north, lower towards the south. The under portion of these deposits had become semi-petrified up to a height varying from 20 feet to 50 feet in proportion to the loftiness of the hills themselves. We were travelling in a south-east direction along these sand banks cut abruptly vertically, and when we left them and turned due south across a flat bay in the desert there were sand-hills to the east and west about one mile apart.

At the most northern end of the western range a round tower could be seen on the summit of a hillock. Having crossed over the low hill range before us we descended into a long, flat, sandy stretch with tamarisk shrubs in abundance. In an arc of a circle from north to south there extended sand accumulations in various guises, the highest being some lofty conical hills due east of our course. To the west in the distance we were encircled by the Patang Kuh and the Mukh Surk ranges, which also extended from north to south.



THE GATE OF RUSTAM'S CITY, as seen from Rustam's House.

Two farsakhs (eight miles) brought us to the British Consular Postal Station of Mahomed Raza Chah, a mud structure of two rooms and an ante-room between. One room was full of provisions, the other accommodated the three postal *sawars* (riders). Twelve holes had been dug in search of water, but only two had been successful. One of the sawars, a Beluch, on a *jumbaz* camel, was just coming in with the post, and he was a very picturesque figure in his white flowing robes and turban over the curly long hair hanging upon his shoulders. One mile off, six or seven more deep holes had been bored for water, but with no success. Tamarisk was plentiful.

We were now getting near the ruins of Sher-i-Rustam or Sher-i-Sukhta, the city of Rustam, the Persian hero. North-east of it one came first to a ruined tower, then to a burial ground with single graves and graves in sets of two and three, very similar in shape to those we had seen on the Kuh-i-Kwajah. These, too, were above ground, but were made of mud instead of stone. Most of the graves had been broken through. The graveyard was situated on a sand hillock.

In the distance, to the east and south-east of Rustam's city, there spread from the north a long stretch of ruins, which probably were part of the continuation of the great Zaidan. A number of towers—as many as six being counted in a line—and a high wall could be perceived still standing. This must evidently have been a fort, and had what appeared to be the wall of a tower at its north-west end. Other extensive ruins could just be observed further south-east, and also to the south-west, where a high tower stood prominent against the sky.

When close to Rustam's city we went through a walled oblique-angled parallelogram enclosing a tower. A great portion of the wall had collapsed, but it appeared to have been an outpost north of the city.

The next thing was an ancient dry canal which came from the east by south-east, and we then found ourselves before Rustam's abode. The photograph given in the illustration was taken as we approached the city and gives a good idea of the place as it appeared beyond the foreground of sand and salt. The place was in most wonderful preservation considering its age. There were four high towers to the north, the two central towers which protected the city gate being close together and more massive than the corner ones, which were circular and tapering towards the summit. The wall of the city was castellated and stood some 30 feet high. The city gate, protected by an outer screen, was to the east, and was two-storeyed. It led directly into the main street of the city.

I cannot do better than enumerate the characteristics of the city in the order in which I noticed them on my visit to it. A path, like a narrow platform, was visible all round half-way up inside the wall, as well as another on the top which gave access from one tower to another. There were no steps to reach the summit of the towers, but merely inclined planes.

On entering the city gate—the only one—one came at once upon Rustam's palace—a three-tiered domed structure with a great many lower annexes on its western and southern sides. A wall adjoining the city gate enclosed Rustam's quarters, and had a large entrance cut into it leading to the dwelling. The various floors were reached by a series of tunnelled passages on inclined planes. Rustam's favourite room was said to have been the top one, represented in the photograph facing page [266](#), where the outside of the two top storeys of the building can be seen.

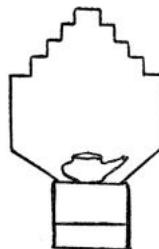
The domed room was well preserved, and had a sort of raised portion to sit upon. The ceiling was nicely ornamented with a frieze and a design of inverted angles. The room had four windows, and a number of slits in the north wall for ventilating purposes. It was a regular look-out house, commanding a fine view all round above the city wall of the great expanse of desert with its ancient cities to the east, and distant blue mountains to the west. There were a number of receptacles, some of which had been used for burning lights, and five doors leading into other rooms. These rooms, however, were not so well preserved—in fact, they had mostly collapsed, their side walls alone remaining. No wood had been used in the construction of the building and all the ceilings were vaulted.

Rustam's "compound," to use the handy word of the east, occupied about one-quarter of the area of the town and filled the entire south-east corner. Besides the higher building it contained a great many side structures, with domes, unfortunately, only half-standing, and showing the same peculiarity as all the other domes in the city, *i.e.*, they had all collapsed on the north side while the southern part was preserved. In the photograph facing page [268](#) this is shown very clearly. This was, of course, due to the potent northerly winds. Rustam's tall house and high walled enclosures can be seen in this photograph, some semi-collapsed domes of great proportions showing just above the high enclosing wall.

A spacious court commanded by a raised passage from north to south—evidently for soldiers to patrol upon—was within the enclosure, and, in fact, Rustam's premises formed a regular strong citadel within the city.

On the ground floor, now considerably below the level of the street outside, was a long room, like a store-room. In the north wall it had a most wonderful arrangement of ventilating chambers, which made the room deliciously cool. These contrivances were like slits in the wall, with boxed-in channels, where a great draught was set up by the natural inflow and outflow of cooler and hotter air from above and under ground, and from in and out of the sun. A great many receptacles could be noticed in the lower portion of the wall, and also some low mangers, as if sheep had been kept here to supply meat for the inmates of the citadel in time of siege.

Next to this, with an entrance on the main street, was Rustam's reception hall—a great big room with domes no less than 18 feet high inside, but now fallen through in two places. There were doors on the south and north, and eleven receptacles specially constructed for lamps. These receptacles were rather quaint in their simple design.



RECEPTACLE FOR LIGHT.

All round Rustam's palace the city wall was double, and strengthened with outside battlements. The same thing was noticeable in two portions of the city wall to the west and south sides. The city wall was irregular in shape, and impressed one as having been built at various epochs, and the city had the appearance of having been enlarged in comparatively recent times. There was a moat outside the wall, but in many places it had got filled up with sand. A glance at the plan which I drew of the city will give an idea of its shape.



THE REMAINS OF THE TWO UPPER STOREYS OF RUSTAM'S HOUSE.

On the north side of the main street, opposite Rustam's house, was a large stable, unroofed, and showing in the wall a number of mangers, which appeared as if a large number of horses had been kept.

Besides these there were in the western portion of the city quantities of domed roofs, very small, a few still perfect, but mostly fallen in on the northern side. The houses directly under the shelter of the northern wall were in the best preservation, and many of them were still almost entirely above ground. They were quadrangular or rectangular in shape, made of mud, and with a low door on the south side. The larger ones had ventilating channels with perforated slits in the north wall, like those in Rustam's store-room, but all the houses were extremely small—an average of 12 feet by 12 feet.

In the southern portion of the city, where exposed to the wind, the dwellings were deep-buried in sand, and hardly more than the domes remained above ground. There were, however, one or two higher buildings, presumably some of the better dwellings inhabited by Rustam's officers. A portion of the south walls, which, curiously enough, had quadrangular towers instead of tapering circular ones, had collapsed, and so had the corresponding portion of the north wall.

The city wall was of great interest, and even on the west side, where it was of less strength, was constructed in successive tiers, each of less than a man's height, and each with a path extending all along so that it could be remanned continuously in time of attack. When one man of the higher platform fell another could replace him immediately from the platform directly below. The towers were much higher than the wall.

The city gate was of great strength the two front towers being strengthened inwardly by a third quadrangular tower. A raised block under the gateway was said to be the execution place.

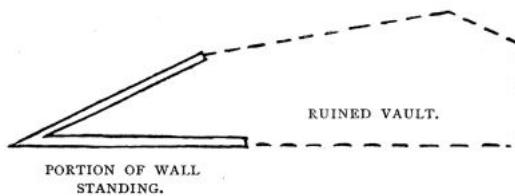
This city, historians declare, was destroyed by Bahram, who caused it to be burnt, but there is no evidence whatever in the buildings to show that a conflagration ever occurred in this place at all. In fact, it is rather difficult to understand how buildings entirely of mud could be burned. The city, it is said, was abandoned only about a century ago, when the Sarbandi entered it by treachery and drove out the Rais tribe.



RUSTAM's CITY, showing Rustam's House in Citadel, also domed roofs blown in from the North.

A few hundred feet to the south outside the city wall are the remains of the stable of Rustam's legendary gigantic horse. Part of the high wall still stands up on the top of the section of a vault, but the greater portion of the building, which was evidently of great proportions, is now buried in sand. The exact spot is pointed out where the manger stood, and so is the point where the heel ropes of this famous horse were tied. This circumstance misled one traveller into stating in 1872 that "two hills, one mile apart to the south-west, denoted the places where the manger and the spot where the head of this famous horse were tied." This error has been copied faithfully by subsequent travellers, including very recent ones (see *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, February, 1902, page 142).

There seemed little doubt that the huge building, of which the wall reproduced in the illustration made part, was a stable, and that it must have been of special importance could be seen by the elaborate cross pattern decorations on its outer face. The fragment of the wall stands over 50 feet high, and to all appearance some twenty more feet of it are underground, buried by the sand. It had strong supports at its base.

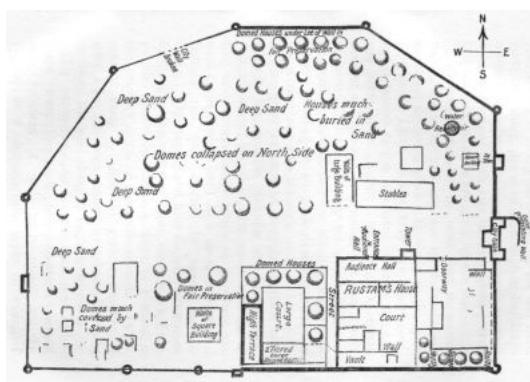


The stable was most peculiarly shaped, ending in a sharp point at one end.

Another dry canal was noticeable to the west of the ruins which went from south to north, with a branch canal going due west. North-west and west were to be seen other ruined cities, one of which, with two high quadrangular towers, was approximately three miles distant. To the west on two hills were fortresses, but between these and Rustam's city lay an immense graveyard (about one mile from Sher-i-Rustam), with graves above ground—mainly single ones, but also a few family ones in adjoining compartments.

As we went along due west another ruined city was pointed out, Zorap, a very ancient place, where Bahram is said to have impaled the body of Firamurz, Rustam's son.

We crossed two more dry canals of some magnitude, running parallel, which showed that in former days this now barren part of Sistan must have been under flourishing cultivation. In fact, further on we came upon traces of houses and of extensive irrigation, the soil having quite a different appearance to the usual *lut* where left untouched by human tools.



PLAN OF SHER-I-RUSTAM.

We then came across what at first seemed a confused commotion of sand and mud, but its formation was very curious, and looked as if it covered an underlying city of great size. The surface sand seemed to reproduce to a certain extent the form of the structures that were down below, such as quadrangular buildings, walls, domes, etc. It was not the natural formation of sand on a natural ground. In one particular place a whole city wall with towers could be traced, just showing above ground, so perfectly rectangular that although covered by sand it would seem certain that a fortress must be buried under this spot.

All around these particular suspected buried cities the sand is absolutely flat, and there would be no other plausible reason for this most extraordinary irregular accumulation of sand reproducing forms of walls, domes and towers against all the general rules of local sand accumulations, unless such obstacles existed below to compel the sand to accumulate in resemblance to them. This theory is

strengthened too by the fact that, here and there, some of the higher buildings actually may be seen to project above ground. The sand mixed with salt had, on getting wet, become solid mud, baked hard by the sun.

Anybody interested in sand and its movements, its ways and process of accumulation, could not do better than take a trip to this part of Sistan. Little as one may care about sand, one is bound to get interested in its ways, and one point in its favour is that with a certain amount of logic and observation one can always understand why it has assumed a certain formation rather than another—a pleasing feature not always existing in all geological formations of the scenery one goes through.

The great expanse of irregular surface soil, with its innumerable obstacles and undulations, was, of course, bound to give curious results in the sand accumulations south of it, where the sand could deposit itself in a more undisturbed fashion and was affected by purely natural causes. Of course, sand hills do not accumulate in the flat desert unless some obstacle—a mere pebble, a tamarisk shrub, a ridge, or a stone, is the primary cause of the accumulation. In the present case, I think the greater number of sand hills had been caused by tamarisk shrubs arresting the sand along its flight southwards.

To enumerate and analyse each sand hill—there were thousands and thousands—would take volumes. I will limit myself to the various most characteristic types of which I give diagrams. The absolutely conical type was here less noticeable, being too much exposed to the wind, which gradually corroded one side of each hill more than the other.

Whatever their shape, the highest point of the sand hills was in any case always to the north-east, the lower to the south-west. As can be seen by the diagram there were single hills and composite ones; there were well-rounded hills, semi-spherical hills, and then came the sand dunes, such as those on the right of our track, like long parallel walls of sand extending for great distances from east to west.



VIEW OF SHER-I-RUSTAM FROM RUSTAM'S HOUSE. (West portion of City under the lee of wall.)

One sand hill, 80 feet high, quite semi-spherical, and with a solitary tamarisk tree on its top, rising some 40 feet above all the others, was quite a landmark along this route. It marked a point from which to the east of our track we found more uniformity in the shape of the sand mounds, which were lower and all semi-spherical. To the west of the track, curiously enough, there were hardly any sand hills at all,—but this was due, I think, to the fact that tamarisk shrubs did not seem to flourish on the latter side, and therefore did not cause the sand to accumulate.

Several miles further, however, at a spot protected by high sand dunes, tamarisk trees were found growing, some being 4 to 6 feet high, and seeming quite luxuriant after the usual desert shrubs which hardly ever rise above two to three feet.

Sadek had purchased at Warmal two big bottles of milk for my use, but as we had found no good water on the way and the heat of the sun was great, he could not resist the temptation, and had drunk it all. When I claimed it he professed that my cats had stolen it. A long jolting ride on the jumbaz camel produced the marvellous result that, although the cats had drunk the milk, Sadek himself was attacked by indigestion caused by it. He seemed to suffer internal agony, and lay on his camel's hump doubled up with pain. He felt so very ill that he requested me to take him on my camel, and to let him exchange places with my driver. To my sorrow I consented.

In a moment of temporary relief from the aching of his digestive organs he entered into one of his favourite geographical discussions. Having for the twentieth time eradicated from his brain the notion that London and Russia were not suburbs of Bombay, he now wanted to know whether *Yankidunia* (by which glorified name the Persians call the United States of America) were inside the "walls" of London city or outside!

He had an idea that the earth was flat, and that London, Bombay and Russia were together on the extreme edge of it. The stars he believed to be lighted up nightly, as one would candles or paraffin lamps. Fortunately, while explaining to me his extraordinary theory of how it was that the moon never appeared alike on two successive nights, he was again seized with another fearful attack, and tumbled off the camel.

Sadek was most unfortunate with animals. He was hated by them all. When he went near horses they would kick, buck and neigh as if a wolf had been at hand; mules stamped at his sight; cats bolted as if he were about to beat them; and camels were restless and made most fearful noises of disapproval and distress at his approach. When he tried to get on and off, the kneeling camel would suddenly spring up again, causing him to fall, and when he did get on the saddle the vicious brutes would assume a most unusual and uncomfortable jerky motion, which bumped him to such an extent that he could not stand it long, and had to get off. The animals evidently did it purposely to get rid of him, for when I got on any of them they went beautifully. Hence, whenever Sadek wished to ride comfortably he always requested to change seats with my driver, who occupied the front seat on the hump of my camel.



VIEW OF SHER-I-RUSTAM FROM RUSTAM'S HOUSE. (South-east section of City.)

We had a glorious sunset on that evening, not unlike an aurora borealis, in brilliant rays of light radiating from a central point. The sun had already disappeared behind the blue mountain chain, and each bright vermillion ray had like a fish bone or like a peacock's feather, myriads of cross off-shoots in the shape of lighter sprays of light. There was a brilliant yellow glow which tinted the blue sky and made it appear of various gradations, from bright yellow at the lower portion to various delicate shades of green in the centre, blending again into a pure deep cobalt blue high up in the sky, and on this glorious background the feathery vermillion sprays shot up to half way across the celestial vault. Other smaller sprays of vivid yellow light flared up in a crescent nearer the mountain edge.

It was quite a glorious sight, unimpeded by the grand spread of sand in the foreground and a patch or two of humble tamarisks.

The rapidity with which night descends upon the desert, is, as we noticed several times, quite amazing. There was hardly any twilight at all. In a few seconds this beautiful spectacle vanished as by enchantment, and was converted into a most mournful sight. The vermillion feathery sprays, now deprived of the sun's light upon them, were converted into so many gigantic black feathers—of rather funereal appearance—and the emerald green sky became of a dead leaden white. The deep blue, fringed with red and yellow, of the radiant mountains had now turned into a sombre, blackish-grey.

About four miles before reaching Girdi a track branches off, which avoids that place altogether, and rejoins the track again one mile south of Girdi, thus saving a considerable detour.

Our march that day had been from Warmal to Mahomed Raza-Chah (altitude 2,100 feet), eight miles, and from that place to Girdi-chah, twenty-eight miles. The track between the two latter stations was perfectly level, and on *jumbaz* camels going at a good pace the journey had occupied eight hours and a half.

On arriving at Girdi (altitude 2,200 feet), the Beluch *sawar* whom I had taken as guide from Mahomed Raza Chah, and my Beluch driver had a most touching scene on meeting some Beluch of a caravan travelling in the opposite direction to mine and camping at Girdi for the night.

The men hastily dismounted from their camels, put their heads together and pressed each the other's right hand, holding it on the heart.

"It is my brother!" cried my camel man, and then followed another outburst of effusion on the brother's part, who seized my hand in both his and shook it heartily for a considerable time. The others followed suit.

There is nothing that an Afghan or a Beluch likes better than a good hearty hand-shake.

CHAPTER XXVII

Girdi-chah, a desolate spot—Its renowned water—Post-houses and Persian Customs soldiers—Nawar-chah and its well—The salt river Sheila—Its course—Beautiful colours in salt crystals—Tamarisks—The Kuh-i-Malek-Siah—The loftiest mountain—Afghans—Hormak, a picturesquely situated post station—A natural pyramid of rock—Natural fortresses—The Malek-Siah Ziarat—Where three coveted countries meet—The hermit—The evolution of a sand hill—Parallel sand dunes—In Beluchistan—Robat, the most north-easterly British post.

GIRDI-CHAH (altitude 2,200 feet), a desolate spot in a desolate region, remains impressed in the minds of visitors merely and only for the vileness of its water. Sadek brought me a glass of it for inspection, and it was so thick with salt and dirt that it resembled in colour and density a mixture of milk and coffee. In flavour I do not know what it was like because I would not drink it, but I induced Sadek to try it and let me know, and he said that it tasted like salt, sand, and bad eggs mixed together. Unluckily, Sadek had omitted to fill the skins with good water at Warmal, and after our long march of 36 miles we should have been in a bad plight, had not the Beluch men in charge of the other caravan offered us some good water from their supply to drink and cook with.

The post station at Girdi has a high wall round it, with two rooms for *sawars*, and one adjoining for their families, and grain shop. There are four watch towers at the corners of the wall of sun-dried bricks, and a path on the top to go from one tower to the other. A canal has been cut to drain as much rain water (the only water obtainable here) as possible into a small pond, but the pond was nearly dry and only had in it some filthy salt water densely mixed with camel refuse. It was of a ghastly green with patches of brown, and some spots of putrefaction in circular crowns of a whitish colour. The surface was coated with a deposit of sand, dirt and salt.

A few yards from the British Consular post-house stood a small hut in which two Persian Customs soldiers were stationed. They were picturesquely attired in peaked white turbans, long yellow coats,

leather belts with powder and bullet pouches, and various other adjuncts. They were armed with long, old-fashioned matchlocks.

These men and the postal *sawars* complained of the terrible water—and no wonder!—but although they seemed painfully worn and thin it had not actually caused them any special illness so far. They generally laid in a small supply of better water from the well six miles off.

On our way in that direction when we left the next morning we again saw in the distance to the east and south-east four or five ruined cities. Tamarisk was plentiful and grew to quite a good height.

We passed the post-house of Nawar-chah with its well of fairly good water. The well was some three feet in diameter and water had been struck fifteen feet below the surface. The shelter, with a low mud enclosure round it, was very similar to the one at Mahomed Raza-chah.

At each post-house one was generally greeted by a Beluch cat with pointed ears, who came out in the hopes of getting a meal, then by picturesque, bronzed-faced Beluch *sawars*, with luxuriant black hair and beard, and white turbans and cloaks. This being a minor station, there were only two *sawars* and no animals, whereas at stations like Girdi there were a *duffadar* in charge, four *sawars*, two attendants, two camels and two horses.

Some three miles south-east of Nawar more ruins could be seen, a small tower and three large square towers with north and south walls in great part blown down, but with eastern and western walls standing up to a great height. A separate domed building could also be observed a little way off.

Perhaps one of the most interesting natural sights on the journey to the Beluchistan frontier was the great salt river—the Shela—which we struck on that march, six miles from Nawar. It was by far the largest river I had seen in Persia, its channel being some 100 yards wide in places. It came from the mountains to the south-west, where thick salt deposits are said to exist, and at the point where we crossed it its course was tortuous and the river made a sharp detour to the south-east. All along the watercourse extensive sediments of salt lined the edge of the water, and higher up, near the mountains, the water is said to be actually bridged over by salt deposits several inches thick.

Most interesting incrustations of salt were visible under the water, especially at the side of the stream, where, with the reverberation of the sun's rays, most beautiful effects of colour were obtained in the salt crystals. The following were the colours as they appeared from the edges of the stream downwards:—light brown, light green, emerald green, dark green, yellow, warm yellow, deep yellow, then the deep green of the limpid water.

The river banks on which we travelled were about 60 feet high above the actual stream, and owing to a huge diagonal crack across our track we had to deviate nearly half a mile in order to find a way where my camels could get across. The Shela proceeds along a tortuous channel in a south-easterly direction, enters Afghan territory, and loses itself, as we shall see, in the south-west Afghan desert.

It is said that when, which is now but rarely, the Hamun-Halmund is inundated, the overflow of water from the lake so formed finds its way by a natural channel into the Shela, which it swells, and the joint waters flow as far as and fill the Shela Hamun or Zirreh in Afghanistan, which is at a lower level than the Hamun-Halmund. When I saw the lake in Afghanistan, however, it was absolutely dry.

The Shela river had very large pools of deep water almost all along that part of it which is in Sistan territory, but there was hardly any water flowing at all, so that nowadays in dry weather it loses itself in the sand long before reaching the depression in Afghan territory, where, by the great salt deposits, it is evident that a lake may have formerly existed, but not now.

After leaving the Shela we were travelling again on the sandy *lut*, and not a blade of vegetation of any kind could be seen. We came to two tracks, one going south-west, the other due south. We followed the latter. As we got some miles further south a region of tamarisks began, and they got bigger and bigger as we went along. Where some shelter existed from the north winds, the shrubs had developed into quite big trees, some measuring as much as 20 feet in height. For a desert, this seemed to us quite a forest. Near the well of salt water, half way (12 miles) between the two postal stations, the tamarisks were quite thick.

Sixteen miles from Nawar, however, some great sand dunes, like waves of a sea, extending from east to west, were again found, together with undulations of sand and gravel, and here tamarisks again became scarce. The track had been marked with cairns of stones at the sides. Where the wind had full sway, the long sand banks, parallel to one another and very regular in their formation, appeared exactly like the waves of a stormy ocean.

The track went towards the south-west, where one has to get round the point of Afghanistan, which, projects west as far as the Kuh-i-Malek-Siah (Mountains). We were steering into what appeared at first a double row of mountains in a mountain mass generally called the Malek-Siah. To the west, however, on getting nearer we could count as many as four different ranges and two more to the east of us. The last range, beyond all of the four western ones, had in its S.S.W. some very high peaks which I should roughly estimate at about eight to ten thousand feet above the plain. Due west there were also some high points rising approximately from six to seven thousand feet, and in front of these and nearest to the observer, a low hill range. A high even-topped range, like a whale's back, and not above 3,000 feet above the plain, had a conical hill on the highest part of its summit. The loftiest mountains were observed from south to south-west, and they, too, had a low hill barrier before them. Many of the peaks were very sharply pointed, and highest of all stood a strange looking three-humped mountain (280° W.) with a deep cut on its westerly side, and a pointed peak standing by it.

The sand under foot had given place here to gravel and large pebbles, yellow, red, grey, white and green, all well rounded as if they had been rolled by water for many a mile. The underlying sand was cut into many channels by the action of water. We were some four miles off the mountainous mass. Tamarisk was scarce and undersized.

We were gradually rising on a slightly inclined plain, and on examining the ground one could not help thinking with what terrific force the torrents must come down—when they do come down—from the mountain sides which they drain before losing themselves in the sand. During abnormally rainy weather, no doubt, a good deal of this drainage forms an actual stream which goes to swell the river Shela. Its channel comes from Hormak and flows first in a north-easterly then in an almost due easterly direction.

We had intended stopping at Hormak, thirty-two miles from Girdi, our previous halting place, and we had been on the saddle from 9 in the morning till 8.30 P.M., when we came across a lot of Afghans with their camels, and they told us that we were on the wrong track for the post-house and well. It was very dark and we could not see where we were going, as the sand had covered up the track. We were among a lot of confused sand hills, and the high mountains stood directly in front like a formidable black barrier, their contour line just distinguishable against the sky.

The camel driver, who had made me discharge the postal *sawar* guide, because he was certain he knew the road well himself, was now at a loss. The Afghans collected round us and yelled at the top of their voices that Hormak was to the west of us, and the camel man insisted that the post house must surely be on the high track, on which we certainly seemed to have got again.

I had ridden ahead, and after an anxious hour Sadek, with all the luggage, and the second camel man arrived, and we decided to leave the track and try our luck among the mountains to the west.

Now, to find a little mud house, hidden in some sheltered spot among rocks and hills, on a dark night is not the easiest of matters. The camels stumbled among the big boulders when once we had got off the track, and we had to dismount and walk. As luck would have it, after going about half an hour we came to a nice spring of water, of which in the stillness of the night we could plainly hear the gurgling. Guided by it, and a few feet above it in a sheltered position, we struck the post-house.

The post-house has, of course, been built here (one mile away from the high track) because of this spring. There is a direct track to it which branches off the main track, about 3 miles north, but we had missed this.

The night was a very cold one—we were at 3,380 feet above sea level—and we lighted a big fire in the middle of the small mud room. As there was no outlet for the smoke except the door, in a few minutes the place got unbearably hot, and I had to clear out, but Sadek and my camel men, who were regular salamanders, seemed to enjoy it and found it quite comfortable.

There were two rooms, one occupied by the four postal *sawars*, the other by five Persian Customs employees. The two camels and two horses for the postal service were kept in the mud walled enclosure.

Hormak, when the sun rose, proved to be one of the most picturesquely situated stations on the entire route between Sher-i-Nasrya and Nushki. It stood on a hill of sand and gravel in the centre of a basin of high reddish-brown mountains which screened it all round. There was an opening to the east which gave a glimpse of the desert extending into Afghanistan, this station being not far from the border.

Our track was to the south-west, and wound round between handsome mountains. A strange high pyramid of rock stood on our way, and the sides of the mountains, where cut by the water, showed the interesting process of petrification in its various stages in the strata of the mountains. In hills of conical formation the centre was the first to become solidified, and where subsequent rain storms had washed away the coating around that had not yet become petrified curious rocky pillars were left standing bare on the landscape.

We altered our course to due south along a river bed, and had high sand hills to our right. Now that we were approaching Beluchistan the track was well defined, and about 16 feet broad, with sides marked by a row of stones. To the west of the track were a series of high sand walls (facing west) 300 feet high, and some most peculiar red, pointed, conical hills rose above them on the east side of these walls. It was after reaching these peculiarly coloured hills that the track began a gradual descent. The highest point on the track was 3,670 feet.

We passed a strange mount shaped like a mushroom, and the same formation could be noticed on a smaller scale in many other smaller hills, the lower portion of which had been corroded by wind or water or both, until the petrified centre of the hill remained like a stem supporting a rounded cap of semi-petrified earth above it.

From the west there descended another water channel, quite dry. We next found ourselves in a large basin one mile across and with an outlet to the north-east, at which spot a square castle-shaped mountain stared us in the face. A similar fortress, also of natural formation, was to the south-south-west, and between these two the Robat track was traced. Another outlet existed to the south-east. To the west, north, east and south-east there were a great many sand-hills, and to the south-south-west high rugged mountains.

A strong south-westerly gale was blowing and the sky was black and leaden with heavy clouds. We were caught in several heavy showers as we proceeded along a broad flat valley amid high and much broken-up black mountains (north-west) the innumerable sharp pointed peaks of which resembled the teeth of a saw. At their foot between them and our track stretched a long screen of sand accumulations—in this case facing north-west instead of west, the alteration in the direction being undoubtedly due to the effect of the mountains on the direction of the wind.

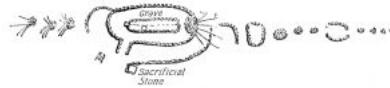
To the east there were rocks of a bright cadmium yellow colour, some 45 feet high, with deposits of sand and gravel on them as thick again (45 feet). The mountains behind these rocks showed a similar formation, the yellow rock, however, rising to 120 feet with rock above it of a blackish-violet colour, getting greenish towards the top where more exposed to the wind.

The valley along which we were travelling averaged about 200 yards wide, from the sand hills on one side to those on the other, and was at an incline, the eastern portion being much lower than the western. The yellow rocks at the side bore marks of having been subjected to the corrosive action of water, which must occasionally fill this gully to a great height during torrential rains.

We came to a most interesting point—the Malek Siah Ziarat, which in theory marks the point where the three coveted countries, *i.e.*, Persia, Afghanistan and Beluchistan, meet. The actual frontier, however, is on the summit of the watershed, a short distance to the east of the Ziarat.

This Ziarat was a fine one, of the Beluch pattern, not covered over by a building such as those, for instance, that we had found on Kuh-i-Kwajah. There seemed to be a fate against photographing these Ziarats. It was only under the greatest disadvantages that I was ever able to photograph them. On this particular occasion I had hardly time to produce my camera before a downpour, such as I had seldom experienced, made it impossible to take a decent picture of it.

There was a central tomb 15 feet long, of big round white stones, supported on upright pillars of brown and green stone, and a white marble pillar at each end. Circular white marble slabs were resting on the tomb itself, and a few feet from this tomb all round was a wall, 3 feet high, of upright pillars, of brown and green stone, forming an oblong that measured 20 feet by 8 feet, with a walled entrance at its south-eastern extremity. An additional wall like a crescent protected the south-eastern end of the oblong, and due east in a line were three stone cairns with bundles of upright sticks fixed into them, on which hung rags of all colours.



Plan of Kuh-i-Malek Ziarat.

To the west of the tomb, between it and the enclosing wall, was a great collection of long sticks and tree branches—which must have been brought here from a great distance—and at their foot offerings of all sorts, such as goat-horns, ropes, leather bags, hair, stones, marble vessels, and numberless pieces of cloth.

In the spring of each year, I am told, the Beluch make a pilgrimage to this Ziarat, and deposit some very quaint little dolls made with much symbolic anatomical detail.

Extending west, in the direction of Mecca, from the main Ziarat, were nine more stone cairns, most of them having a *panache* of sticks and being divided into sets of three each, with a higher wall in the shape of crescents between. A second wall of round stones protected the north-west side of the Ziarat. Where it met the entrance way into the inner wall there was a much used sacrificial slab where sheep were beheaded.

To the north-east of the Ziarat were a number of cairns, and a small stone shelter in which lived a hermit. This old fanatic came out to greet us with unintelligible howls, carrying his vessel for alms, and a long stick to which a rag was attached. He touched us all on the head with it, which was meant as a blessing, and we gave him some silver pieces, which he said he did not want for himself, but for the Ziarat. He wore chains like a prisoner. He appeared to be in an advanced stage of idiocy and *abrutissement*, caused by his lonely life in his 5 feet cubic stone cabin among the desolate Malek-Siah mountains.

Having at this place rounded the most westerly point of the Afghan frontier we turned due east on a tortuous but well defined track. At this point began the actual British road, and being from this point under British supervision it was well kept, and made extremely easy for camel and horse traffic.

Three miles from the Ziarat the sand hills began to get smaller and smaller to the west, but still remained high to the east. One was particularly struck by the peculiar formation of the mountains. To the west they formed a continuous rugged, irregularly topped chain, with sharp pointed peaks, whereas to the east we had isolated, single domed hills all well rounded and smooth.

Where the track turns sharply south-east we entered a vast basin with picturesque high mountains to the south and north, and a series of single well-rounded mounds in front of them, rising from one to two thousand feet above the plain.

On nearing Robat one finds the scenery plainly illustrating the entire evolution of a small sand hill into a high mountain. We have the tiny mounds of sand, only a few inches high, clogged round tamarisk shrubs, then further higher and higher mounds, until they spread out so far that two, three, or more blend together, forming a low bank, and then banks increase to high dunes 40 feet, 50 feet, 100 feet high. These grow higher and higher still; the sand below is compressed by the weight above; water exercises its petrifying influence from the base upward, and from the centre outward, and more sand accumulates on the upper surface until they become actual hill ranges of a compact shale-like formation in horizontal strata, each stratum being slightly less hardened than the underlying, and each showing plainly defined the actions of water and sun to which they were exposed when uppermost. Then, above these hills, further accumulations have formed, which solidifying in turn have in the course of centuries become high mountains. They have, however, never lost the characteristics of the little primary accumulation against the humble tamarisk, to which they still bear, on a large scale, the closest resemblance.

We passed a great many parallel sand dunes, 100 feet high, east and west of our track, and went through a cut in one of these sand banks, beyond which the sand hills had accumulated in a somewhat confused fashion upon a crescent-shaped area. They seemed of a more ancient formation than those to the west of the track, and had a great quantity of shingle upon them, which gave them a black and greenish appearance, while those to the west were of a light brown colour. The shingle in this case, I think, had not formed on the hillocks themselves, but had been washed and blown down from the high mountains to the east.

We were now in the territory of Beluchistan, and with a bounding heart—after the experience of Persian rest-houses—we saw a nice clean square whitewashed bungalow standing on a high prominence under the shelter of a rugged mountain. This was Robat, the furthestmost British post in West Beluchistan.

Although still some 463 miles from the nearest railway I looked upon this spot as the end of my difficult travelling, and, taking into consideration the fact that most of that distance had to be performed across barren and practically uninhabited country, I found that I was not far wrong in my opinion.

CHAPTER XXVIII

The Lahr Kuh—Robat *thana* and bungalow—Said Khan—Persian and Beluch music, songs and dancing—Beluch musical instruments—Beluch melodies, love and war songs—Comic songs—Beluch voices—Persian melodies—Solo songs—Ululations—Persian instruments—Castanets—Persian and Beluch dancing—The *chap*.

SOUTH-WEST of Robat (at 210° bearings magnetic) stands a fine mountain, the Lahr Kuh, and from it descends a little stream flowing towards the north-east. There is a large *thana* (fortified post-house) at Robat of eight rooms and a spacious court for horses. A shop with grain and provisions is found here, and a post office with the familiar black board outside on which one was rather amused to read the usual postal notices in the English language stuck upon it—announcing Queen Victoria's death, notifying that the office would be closed on such and such bank holidays, and other public news.

The quarters of the *Jemadar* and his seven levies, of the *Duffadar* and the postmaster, were enclosed in the high-walled *thana* with its imposing entrance gate and four towers at the corners. Beyond the *thana* was the old resting place built of stone, with six rooms, but now rather in a tumbling-down condition.

Then last, but not least, of the buildings was the new bungalow, with a nice portico all round. It contained four spacious, lofty rooms with well-drawing chimneys. There were windows, but not yet with glass in them, and this was rather an advantage, because the air of the mountains was pure and better than would have been the shut-in atmosphere of a room. Each room had a bathroom attached to it—but of course the bath had to be brought by the traveller himself.



SAID KHAN, DUFFADAR AND LEVIES AT THE PERSO-BELUCH FRONTIER PORT OF ROBAT.

This was one of two types of rest-houses which are being built by the British Government for travellers on the Nushki-Robat route. The other kind was of similar architecture but with only two rooms instead of four. These bungalows were solidly built, well ventilated and excellent in every way—of course in relation to the country they were in. It was not proposed when they were put up to compete in comfort and *cuisine* with the Carlton Hotel in London, that of Ritz in Paris, or the Waldorf Astoria of New York. They were mere rest-houses for traders and travellers accustomed to that particular kind of travelling, and the British Government ought to be greatly thanked for building these shelters at the principal halting-places on the route. Only a few are completed yet between Robat and Nushki, but their construction is going ahead fast, and within the next year or so, if I understood right, they would all be ready to accommodate travellers. They were a great improvement on the old *thanas*, which, although comfortable enough, were not always quite so clean on account of natives using them.

After travelling in Persia, where one climbs down a good deal in one's ideas of luxury and comfort and is glad to put up even in the most modest hovels, it seemed to me quite the zenith of luxury and comfort to set foot inside a real whitewashed rest-house, with mats on the floor and a fire blazing in a real chimney. News had come that I should arrive that afternoon, and the levies with the *Jemadar* in their best clothes all turned out to receive me, which involved considerable hand-shaking and elaborate compliments, after which I was led into the room that had been prepared for me.

Saïd Khan, who has been employed by the Government to look after the postal arrangements and other political work on the Persian side of the frontier, was also here parading with the others, as can be seen in the illustration.

Saïd Khan was a tall, intelligent, black-bearded, fearless person, wearing a handsome black frock-coat, a mass of gold embroidery on the chest, and a beautiful silver-mounted sword—which, by the way, he wore in a sensible fashion slung across his shoulder; with his well-cut features, strong, almost fierce mouth, finely chiselled nostrils and eagle eyes he was quite a striking figure.

The *Duffadar*, who stood on his right hand, had a most honest and good-natured face, and he, too, looked very smart in his uniform, cartridge bandolier, silver-handled sword and Enfield rifle. His men were also armed with this rifle which, although of old pattern, is very serviceable.

With the exception of Saïd Khan, the people represented in the illustration formed the entire stationary male population of Robat, but some small black tents could be seen in a gully a little way off inhabited by nomad Beluch.

On hearing that I was much interested in music, the *Duffadar*, who was a bit of a musician himself, arranged a concert in which all the local talent took part. On this and many other later occasions I heard Beluch music and singing and saw their dancing, and as I also heard a good deal of Persian music while in Persia I daresay a few words upon the music and dancing of the two countries will not be out of place. In many ways they are akin.

A large instrument called the *Dumbirah* or *Dambura*—something like an Italian mandola—was produced which was handsomely carved and inlaid in silver. It had three strings, two of which were played as bass; on the third the air was twanged in double notes, as the thumb and first finger are held together, the first finger slightly forward, and an oscillation is given from the wrist to the hand in order to sound the note twice as it catches first in the thumb then in the first finger. The effect obtained is similar to that of the *Occalilli* of Honolulu, or not unlike a mandoline, only with the Beluch instrument the oscillations are slower.

The movement of the favourite Beluch melodies resembles that of a Neapolitan tarantella, and these airs are generally more lively than melodies of most other Asiatic people. Endless variations are made on the same air according to the ability and temperament of the musician. The notes of the two bass strings of the instrument are never altered, but always give the same accompaniment on being twanged together with the violin string on which only the actual melody is picked out.

There is then the *Soroz*, a kind of violin made of a half pumpkin, which forms the sounding board, and a handle to it with four keys and four strings. It is played with a bow of horsehair.

The other instruments in use are the *Seranghi*, a kind of superior violin such as the two central ones represented in the full page illustration. It has no less than fourteen keys, is hollow and uncovered in its upper portion, but has a skin stretched in the lower half of its sounding case. It is also perforated underneath and is played with a bow called *gazer*.

The *Rabab* is a larger wooden instrument of a somewhat elongated shape, and its lower portion is also covered by a tight sheepskin—the remainder of the uncovered wood being prettily inlaid with silver and bone. This instrument is twanged with the fingers and has eighteen *killi* or keys, twelve with metal strings and six with gut strings.

The *Surna*, or flute, is made of bamboo with a brass funnel. The mouthpiece is very ingenious, made of crushed cane fastened into a cup which is firmly applied to the lips, thus preventing any wind escaping at the sides. It certainly gives a very piercing sound when played loud.

The *Dohl*, or drum, was also of wood with sheepskins drawn tight at the two ends while wet, rolled up all round the rims of the apertures, and kept in position by leather strips.



BELUCH MUSICIANS (AT SIBI.)

Besides these the Beluch shows much ingenuity in improvising musical instruments to accompany his songs, out of any article which will give some sound, such as his rifle rod, which he balances on a bit of string and taps upon with the blade of his knife, or two pieces of wood which he uses as castanets, and, failing all these, snapping his fingers and keeping time with the melody.

There is a certain weird, barbaric charm in Beluch melodies, and, unlike the Persian, the Beluch possesses a very keen ear, in fact, a thorough musical ear, even according to our rules of harmony. To an unthoughtful European there may indeed be a certain monotony in Beluch melodies, but never a grating discord which will set one's teeth on edge.

Monotony in music, or rather, a repetition of the same melody until it becomes monotonous, is, rather than otherwise—if one comes to think of it—a fault on the right side, for if a melody is repeated time after time it means that the people themselves like it and appreciate it. There is no doubt that anybody with an unspoilt musical ear rather fancies listening over and over again to a melody which appeals to him—and we need not go as far as Beluchistan to be convinced of this—for we ourselves have been known to take fancies to songs of so high a standard as *Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay*, *The Honeysuckle and the Bee*, &c., and we hum them while soaking in our morning tub, we whistle them as we go down to breakfast, we strum them on the piano after breakfast, we hear them rattled outside by a barrel organ, as many times as there are forthcoming pennies from windows, while we are having lunch, we hear them pathetically sung at afternoon parties by hired entertainers, bands play them in the restaurants during dinner, and we hear them in the theatres, in music halls, and everywhere,—so that we cannot very well blame others for the monotony of their melodies since we largely follow the same course as theirs.

The Beluch plays and sings because it gives him real pleasure, and he is quite carried away by his music. Certain notes and combinations of notes, especially such as are very high and shrill, but in good tune, seem to go straight to his heart, and he revels in them. When singing, therefore, he prefers to sing in falsetto—as high as the furthest strain of his voice permits—and having worked himself into a semi-dazed state gradually descends to low deep notes, which by contrast appeal to him and not only give balance and character to his melody but produce quite a good harmonious effect. The low notes, however, are never ejaculated, but hummed, almost buzzed, with a vibration in the voice which is most melodious. The sound is like an indefinite letter U.

The beginning of a song is somewhat sudden and startling, and usually too loud, as if the singer had not properly gauged the extent of his voice in relation to the instrumental accompaniment, but he soon manages to get in most perfect unison with the melody of the dambura and the violin or other instruments, except in cases of singers endowed with extra musical genius, when they will go on improvising by the hour, using the theme as a guide. They generally sing in a minor key, with pretty refrains at the end of each bar.



The most common and favourite air is the above on which elaborate variations are added.

The Beluch singer seldom changes from minor into major or from one key into another, but he is very fond of repeating the same melody in all the octaves within the utmost limits of the compass of his voice. It is considered a feat in singing to hold a note for an interminable time, as also to go through the greater portion of the melody without taking breath, and it really seemed extraordinary that some of the singers did not break a blood vessel in the process. The eyes of the performers got so swollen and almost shooting out of the head with holding the notes so long, and the veins of the temples and arteries in the neck swelled to such an extent as to cause serious apprehension.

On one occasion I heard an improvised song with the accompaniment of the *soroz* (violin) only. This time—an exception in my experience—the song was given in a deep, low, nasal voice, each note being tremulous and held on for several minutes in a most plaintive manner.

Some of the love songs were quite pathetic and touching, and in the war songs, the grievances were poured forth very plaintively with an accompaniment of strings and drums and burst out suddenly into fire and anger. At this point, when the musicians were carried away by the martial words of the song, the instrumental accompaniment became next to diabolical. It was very inspiriting, no doubt, and made them feel very war-like. The din was certainly such as might have turned any man into a fighter.

Love songs, in which the singer imitated women's voices to perfection, were really most graceful and sad, and quite interesting were the musical recitatives with violin accompaniments which the Beluch render in quite a masterly way.

Then there was the comic song—quick-timed and full of life—much too full and too comic to appeal to a European, and so fully illustrated that personally, I infinitely preferred the more melancholic ones which had more music in them.

Duets and trios were occasionally attempted with quite good results, except that there always seemed to be a competition as to who should start highest, and this had occasionally a grating effect.

The Beluch possess most soft musical voices, well-rounded and graceful, quite a contrast even in mere conversation to those of their neighbours the Persians or the Afghans; but the character of the Beluch songs and music is not dissimilar from the Persian, and both betray a markedly Arab origin. In Persian songs, too, an *andante* movement with chorus joining in every few bars frequently occurs, but in the Persian chorus we generally find a liking for chromatic diminuendos and crescendos, which are not so frequent in Beluch music.

Persian music is inspiriting. There are certain musical notes the vibrations of which seem to go to the heart more than others, and on these notes the Persian musician will work his melody. Sad love songs in a falsetto voice are prevalent, and are sung so high that, as with the Beluch, it makes one really quite anxious for the safety of the singer. The notes are kept on so long and the melody repeated so often, that the artery and veins in the singer's neck and temples bulge out in a most abnormal manner.

There is no actual end to a Persian melody, which terminates with the exhaustion of the singer, or abruptly by the sign of the hearers who get tired of it. The musicians every now and then join in the chorus and repeat the refrain.

Tenor solo songs by boys are much appreciated, and these, too, are very plaintive with frequent scales in them and certain notes held long at the end of each bar where the chorus join in. These sustained notes have modulations in them with infinitesimal fractions of tones. Ululations with long, nasal, interminable notes and capricious variations at the fancy of the singer, but based on some popular theme are also much liked by Persians.

More than in anything else, however, the Persian, like the Beluch, delights in tremulous notes, of which he makes ample use in his melodies.

The rhythm of Persian and Beluch music is much alike, although as far as instrumental execution goes the Persian surpasses the Beluch, having a greater variety in his orchestra and the instruments being more perfectly constructed.

The *Santurie*, for instance, a kind of zither, with eighteen sets of three strings each, is a most harmonious instrument from which beautiful effects can be obtained by the player.

The *thar*—a sort of guitar, has four keys and is played with a plectrum, and the *Kermanche*, *Cynthour*, *Tchogor*, the *Tchaminioho*—the latter, a circular instrument covered by a skin, with one metal and two gut strings, on a long metal stand, is played with a bow;—the *dumbuk* (drum), with only one skin pasted round its single aperture, the lower part being solid; the flute pure and proper, with five apertures on one side and one on the other, on which very low clear notes are obtained, and a pretty tremolo,—and other instruments of minor importance, are all employed in Persia.

The Persians are masters at playing the drum. Most marvellous effects are obtained by them. They hold the drum on the left leg with the left arm resting on it, and tap it with the tips of their fingers round its edge. For broader notes it is struck with the palm of the hand. Soft, gentle notes as well as the rumbling sound in good time with the air they accompany, are extracted from the instrument, so fast in its vibrations as to produce a continuous sound that one would never believe came from a drum.



BELUCH DANCE (AT SIBI.)

Metallic castanets are used both by the Persian and Beluch in the dancing, and it is usually the dancers—one or more boys—who play them.

Many of the songs and melodies I heard in Persia reminded me very forcibly of Spanish melodies, which, like these, are undoubtedly of Arab origin.

Whatever fault one may find with Persian or Beluch music, one cannot say that the performers do not play with an immense deal of feeling and *entrain*—a quality (the primary one, to my mind,) in music often lacking in musicians nearer home, but never in Orientals.

The dancing, both Persian and Beluch, is not so interesting. It is usually executed by effeminate long-haired boys generally dressed in a long pleated coat with a tight belt, and wearing a number of metal bells attached to the ankles. The Persian is probably the more lascivious of the two in his movements, and, having begun by throwing his long shock of hair backwards twirls round gracefully enough, keeping good time with the music. This is merely a feat of endurance, resembling the dancing or spinning dervishes of Egypt, and generally ends by the dancer suddenly squatting down upon the floor with his flowing gown fully expanded in a circle around him. The skill of the dancer is shown most in successive dances, such as the slow progression by merely twisting the feet to right and left, occasionally varied by raising one foot directly above the other, then throwing the head far back and the body in a strained curve, with arms raised fluttering like a flying bird, while the song to which he dances imitates a nightingale.

Contortions and suggestive waist movements are much indulged in Persian dancing, as well as throwing the body backwards with the hands almost touching the ground behind and walking while in this position—not unlike an exaggerated form of the "cake-walk" of our American cousins.

Each dance is closed by the dancer throwing himself down upon his knees in front of the musicians, or in turn before each of the spectators.

Beluch dancing was very similar, although much simpler. The two photographs, reproduced in the illustrations, which I took at Sibi, show one a row of Beluch musicians, the other a Beluch boy in the act of dancing a sort of toe-and-heel dance, in which with extended arms he gradually fluttered round, keeping time with the music. In some of the quicker movements he either snapped his fingers or used wooden castanets, or held the pleated skirt of his coat fully extended like butterfly wings. There was very little variation to his dancing which, like the Persian was more a feat of endurance and speed than a graceful performance. The ankle did most of the work.



THE BELUCH-AFGHAN BOUNDARY CAIRN AND MALEK-SIAH MOUNTAINS IN BACKGROUND.

Somewhat more wild and primitive was the *chap* which I witnessed at a camp in north-west Beluchistan. It consisted in swinging the body from right to left, lifting up now one leg and then the other, and waving the head to and fro in a most violent manner. The Beluch get much excited over this dance, which requires some degree of stubborn tenacity, and the spectators urge the dancer to continue when he shows signs of getting tired. All superfluous clothing is discarded in a most alarming manner at various stages of this performance, and the arms are flapped vigorously against the naked body which is made to sound like a drum. The performance is not allowed to stop until the dancer is quite exhausted, when he simply collapses in the arms of one of his friends. The musical accompaniment to this dance verges on the diabolical, the rhythm of what melody there is being interspersed with abundant howls, yells and snapping of fingers from the enthusiastic crowd all round.

CHAPTER XXIX

An excellent track—A quaint rock—A salt rivulet—Laskerisha—Mahammed Raza-chah—Beluch encampment—The horrors of photography—Maternal love—A track to Mirjawa—Kirtaka—Direct track to Sher-i-Nasrya—Track to Kabul—Sand-hills—A wide river bed—A high yellow pillar—Undulating track—Ten sharp-pointed peaks.

FROM Robat (altitude 3,480 feet) we took the capital road which followed a dry river bed until we got quite away from the hills. When the track turned south-east a beautiful view of the Afghan desert south of the Halmund, was obtained to the north-east, while south-south-east (180°, bearings magnetic) stood a high peak, the Saindak Mount. We first skirted very rugged mountains to the south-west which were brilliant in colour and had many peaks fluted by water erosion. Sand-hills gradually dwindled away, leaving long, flat-topped sand-banks invariably facing north. To the south was quite a high sand mountain.

A quaint rock resembling a huge camel's head could be seen to our left above a hill. Then, six miles from Robat, sand-hills began again. The track here lay only a few yards from the Afghan boundary which was marked by stone cairns, six feet high, painted white. To the south was a rugged chain of mountains with low sand-hills before it, and to the north across the Afghan border could now be plainly seen the interesting salt deposit of God-i-Zirreh, and another whose name I do not know. I crossed into Afghan territory with the object of visiting them, and a description will be found in the next chapter.

I returned into Beluchistan to the spot, 14 miles from Robat, where a small salt rivulet swelled by tributaries, descends from the mountains to the south and west. When in flood this stream, which must be enormously enlarged, carries down a great quantity of tamarisk wood, much of which could be seen deposited a long distance from the water's normal banks.

The road stretched in front of us in a perfectly straight line, with neat stone borders on either side, and one got so tired of seeing that line in front of one's nose that one welcomed the smallest change—even a slight ascent or a curve—in its endless, monotonous straightness. We came by and by to a little ascent—quite steep enough for camels. We could have easily avoided it by leaving the road and making a detour at the foot of the hill close to the Afghan boundary. Some caravans do.

From the highest point of the road as we looked back to the north-north-west we saw behind us sand hills, that showed traces of being still much at the mercy of the wind. Further behind, still north-north-west, was a high pointed peak, and then a long blue chain extending from south-west to north-east just rising out of the sand mist. The highest peaks were at the most extreme north-east point. Then the mountains became lower and lower, and the horizon met the flat long line of the desert.

A fine view of the Afghan desert, with its two extensive salt deposits, can be obtained from Laskerisha, a name given to a brackish well on the hill side (3,590 feet) with a ditch and hollow next to it for the convenience of camels. A triangular unroofed shelter has been erected some 80 feet below the well on the hill slope, and other wells have been bored close by, the water of which is undrinkable. This was the highest point of the road 3,590 feet, on that march. Before reaching it we saw a castle-like structure surmounting a peak of the mountain that we had been following to the south; there appeared to be actual windows in it, showing the light through, and a track leading up to it. Unfortunately, the sun—quite blinding—was just behind it when I passed it, and I could not well ascertain with my telescope whether it was a natural formation of rock or a real ancient fortress, nor could I get any information on the subject from the natives, and it was too far out of my track for me to go and visit it.

On our descent on the south-east side of the hill we came across semi-spherical sand mounds in great numbers; the mountains on our right were apparently of volcanic formation. They were very highly coloured, generally bright red with green summits; then there were mountains deep red all over, and further on stood one green from top to bottom, although there was not a thread of vegetation upon it. At the foot of the mountains on the edge of the desert were a few dried up tamarisks.

We stopped at Mahomed Raza-chah, where there are five wells, three of good water and two brackish ones. There was a mere mud *thana* at this place, but wood and bricks were being brought up to construct a bungalow.



REST HOUSE AT MAHOMMED RAZA CHAH OVERLOOKING AFGHAN DESERT.

A number of Beluch were encamped here in their little black tents, hardly five feet high, and with one side of the tent raised up on two sticks. The interior of the tents seemed to be a mass of rags and dirt, among which some primitive implements, such as a wooden pestle and mortar, for pounding wheat, and a bowl or two, could be detected. Otherwise they were most miserable. The tents seemed mostly in the possession of women, children and decrepit old men, the younger folks seeking a livelier life further afield. It is often in the most humble places, however, that one finds unexpected charms.

On the alarm being given that an intruding stranger was at hand the women hastily shut up all the tents, and a picturesque old fellow stalked me about, seeming to become extremely anxious when I was photographing, a proceeding which he did not quite understand. A young man on a camel was coming towards us singing, and inside one of the tents I heard a great commotion evidently caused by the approaching voice. An old woman, in fact, peeped out from a fissure and gave a powerful squeak. She leapt out excitedly, nearly tearing down the whole tent in the process, and, crying bitter tears, rushed with extended arms towards the camel man.

The young fellow having hastily dismounted, a most touching scene of motherly affection ensued, for, as the old man explained to me, he was her son. The poor shrivelled creature threw her arms around his neck and kissed him fondly, first on one cheek and then upon the other, after which, having affectionately taken his face between her hands, she impressed another long, long kiss in the middle of his forehead. She caressed him to her heart's content, the boy looking quite pathetically graceful and reverent under the circumstances. A similar treatment was meted out to him by his sisters, and they all shed tears of delight at seeing one another. Family affection, as well as affection among tribesmen, is indeed extraordinarily effusive and genuine among Beluch of all classes.

The women I saw at this camp wore a sort of long shirt with a sash, and had broad bead and shell bracelets round their wrists.

Mahomed Raza-chah was 3,820 feet above sea level, and the track from this point went south east (to 110° bearings magnetic). There was a *duffadar* in charge of two stations with four *sawars* and four camels. It was all one could do upon this road to find anything of some interest, barring the geological formation of the country and the movement of the sand, which rather began to pall upon one after months of nothing else, and when one came across a patch of tamarisk trees a little taller

than usual one could not take one's eyes off them, they seemed such interesting objects in the monotonous marches.

Twelve miles from Mahomed Raza, tamarisks seemed to flourish, for water was to be found some twenty feet below the surface. A well had been bored for the use of caravans, and the water was quite good. The track was somewhat undulating in this portion of the journey, rising, however, to no greater elevation than 100 feet, but quite steep enough for camels.

About eleven miles from Mahomed Raza-chah, a track diverged to Mirjawa. One noticed on the mountains to our right (south-west) a superabundance of tamarisk, the cause of this abnormal vegetation being undoubtedly long streaks of moisture filtering through the sand. No actual water, however, was visible flowing, not even along a deep channel which bore the marks of having been cut by it, and in which salt deposits were to be seen on the surface soil.

Kirtaka, the next rest-house, was by no means an attractive place, but was interesting, inasmuch as, besides the track over the mountains leading to Mirjawa, a direct route went from this point to Sher-i-Nasrya in Sistan, which city could be reached in three days, by crossing Afghan territory, and cutting off the long westerly detour via Robat—the Malek-Siah; and yet another track to Cabul, the capital of Afghanistan, which could be reached in twenty days. The latter track was said to be absolutely waterless for the first three days' march, no wells and therefore no villages being found, but after three days, on striking the Halmund, plenty of water, fuel, and food could be obtained, and plenty of people were to be met with.

South-east of the old towered enclosure, which had five rooms, a new bungalow of two rooms and bathrooms, with kitchen buildings apart behind, was being built. It was sheltered by a rugged background of mountains of no great height, but picturesque enough and highly coloured when the sun shone upon them. Being, however, well rounded and looking like petrified accumulations of sand, they did not quite compare in interest with the fantastic cutting edges of the Malek-Siah and neighbouring ranges. They formed the southern barrier to the Beluchistan extension of the Afghan desert.

The altitude of Kirtaka was 3,710 feet.

There was a curious Beluch grave here made of white stones with an edge of grey pebbles, and a circle round it, with a smaller outer kneeling place, such as may be seen in the numerous Mesjids so common all over the country, the various styles of which will be duly described in a subsequent chapter.

Innumerable sand hills and, in fact, a long hill range some 350 feet high stood to the west in front of the rocky mountains behind. These caused a great many ups and downs on the track, the principal heights I measured being: 3,800 feet, 3,700 feet, 3,420 feet (8 miles from Kirtaka), this latter altitude where the road lay close to the mountains. Beyond this point the track was south-east (125° bearings magnetic) with picturesque mountains on the east-south-east and high red sand hills in the east, one isolated high black hill lying in the desert beyond. A very pointed conical hill was noticeable, and another like a small replica of Fujisan of Japan fame. This latter hill was in Afghan territory. A number of great rocky pillars stood upright above the hill tops. Twelve miles from Kirtaka we crossed a river bed 150 feet wide, which lost itself in the Afghan desert. Then a mile further we came to another river bed.



BELUCH BLACK TENTS AT MAHOMMED RAZA CHAH.



ROCK PILLAR BETWEEN KIRTAKA AND SAINDAK.

The track here (about 13 miles from Kirtaka) turned south-west following the river bed, then due south, where among the mountains we saw a huge pillar of a brilliant yellow colour and over 50 feet high, standing up by the roadside. The illustration gives a fair idea of it. To the south-east in the direction of our track, which for a change was quite tortuous, were mounds of sand and debris. The

red rock of the mountains seemed crumbling towards the east, whereas the hills to the west were well rounded and padded with sand and gravel.

We went over a low pass 3,810 feet, and then along a flat basin with hills to the south-east, and outlets both to the south-east and east. We had descended to 3,680 feet, but had to go up another pass 4,060 feet, the highest we had so far encountered. Innumerable yellow sand hills were before us to the north-north-east, and here we were on a sort of flat sandy plateau, three-quarters of a mile wide and a mile and a half long. Ten sharp-pointed peaks could be counted to the south-south-east, high mountains were before us to the south-east, and a long range beyond them east-south-east. Sand dunes, shaped like the back of a whale were to the east, and a remarkable spherical mount south-south-east directly in front of the ten peaks. We arrived at Saindak.

CHAPTER XXX

An excursion into Afghanistan—The salt deposits of God-i-Zirreh—Sand hills—Curious formation of hill range—Barchans and how they are formed—Alexander's march through the country—The water of Godar-i-Chah—Afghans and their looks.

THE excursion which I made into Afghan territory to the salt deposit of Gaud- or God-i-Zirreh, and a lower depression to the east of it, was of great interest to me.

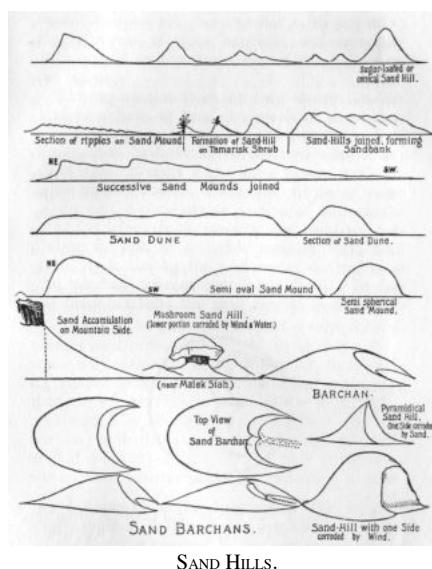
There are a great many theories regarding these former salt lakes, and it is not easy to say which is right and which is wrong. The general belief is that these lakes were formed by the overflow of the Halmund swamp into the Shela (river) which carried sufficient water not only to fill up the God-i-Zirreh, but to overflow when this was full into the next depression east of the Zirreh.

There is no doubt that to a great extent this was the case, but these lakes were, I think, also fed more directly by several small streams descending from the mountains to the south and west of the Zirreh, which form the watershed—and very probably also from the north by the Halmund River itself. Both lakes were dry and seemed to have been so for some time. The God-i-Zirreh, forming now a great expanse of solid salt some 26 miles long by 5 or 6 wide, extends in a long oval from west to east. The other lake was somewhat smaller.

To the south of these salt deposits in the zones between them and the present Afghan boundary, and forming the southern fringe of the Afghan desert, the soil is covered with gravel and stones washed down from the mountain sides. Very stony indeed is the desert towards the Malek-Siah end, then further north-east appear brown earth, shale, and sand. To the north of the lakes was a long line of bright yellow sand extending from west to east and broad enough towards the north to reach the bank of the river Halmund. Another shiny patch, which at first, from a distance, I had mistaken for another smaller lake, turned out on examination to be a stretch of polished shale which shone in the sun, and appeared like bluish water.

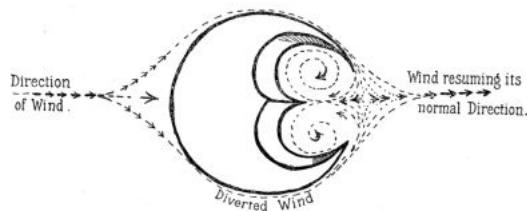
Stunted tamarisk grows in some parts but not in the immediate neighbourhood of the salt deposits. We have here instead a belt of myriads of small conical sand-hills, also spreading from west to east, quite low to the west and getting higher for several miles towards the east. In the south-west part of the desert, curiously enough, between the zone of conical hills and the salt deposits, and parallel to both, lies a row of semi-spherical sand and salt mounds of a whitish colour.

To the east-south-east of the lakes the sand-hills rise to a great height and eventually form a high ridge, which for some reason or other is cut perpendicularly on its western side, possibly as the result of a volcanic commotion. Of similar origin probably was the gigantic crack caused by an earthquake which we shall examine later on near Nushki. In fact, both the crack at Nushki and the collapse of the west side of this hill range, as well as a great portion of that deep crack in the earth's crest in which the Shela flows, have very likely been formed by the same cause. They are within the same zone of volcanic formation. In the particular case of this hill range in Afghanistan the collapse did not appear to me to be due to the action of water, but to a sudden crumbling which had caused a very sharp vertical cut.



To the north of the salt wastes was another long belt of yellow sand extending for some 40 miles, upon which there was absolutely no vegetation, while intervening between the salt and this sand flat were numerous sand barchans, like horseshoes, with a gradual slope on the windward side (north) and a crescent hollow with a steep but not quite vertical bank on the lee side.

I noticed all over Persia, and in Beluchistan as well as here, that these sand barchans, or barchanes, will only form on level ground—generally on extensive plains. All single sand hills, however, whether barchans, conical, semi-spherical, or of more irregular shapes, are invariably caused by a primary obstacle, however small, arresting the sand. Various are the theories with regard to the formation of these barchans, and especially with regard to the formation of the hollow on the lee side.



The explanation from my own observation has—if no other—at least the merit of simplicity. The wind, on meeting the semi-circular back of the barchan, is diverted on the two sides of it; these two currents come into violent collision again on the lee-side, where, the air being more or less still, a considerable portion of the wind is forcibly driven back towards the barchan, corroding its side in a double rotatory way, each such circle having for a diameter the radius of the barchan crescent containing them. In fact in many barchans the sand ripples on the windward slopes cross the direction of the wind at right angles. A line of sand formed in the centre of the barchan crescent in the opposite direction to the wind is often to be seen during wind storms or soon after. I have also seen barchans, the inner crescent of which showed beyond doubt that when there is a prevalent wind from one side only, the above explanation, although less scientifically obscure and elaborate than most, applies, and, I think, it may eventually be found quite the most probable.

The diagram here given will illustrate and, I hope, make quite clear the meaning of my words. In the centre of the crescent can be noticed the action of the parting wind currents.



A CARAVAN OF DONKEYS IN AFGHANISTAN.

North of Kirtaka was a very pointed high conical hill, and not far from it a small replica of Fujisan in Japan, so much were the lines like those of the Japanese mountain. A great many of the drain channels from the mountains to the south extended very far into the desert and some as far as the God-i-Zirreh.

It is also very probable that in the days when Sistan was a most populous region, with uninterrupted towns and villages along and near the Halmund, numerous canals may have intersected the Zirreh region and rendered it a very fertile plain. History would indeed point forcibly towards such a hypothesis. Ample proof that the plain was inhabited still remains in the ruins of Godar-i-Chah, situated at the western limit of the Zirreh salt deposits, Chah-i-Mardan, where a ruined fort and a Ziarat are said to exist, Gumbaz-i-Chah, and others. All these places are now deserted and are being fast buried by the sand. They are mostly along the Shela (river) banks, and the natives of Sistan say that they have heard from their ancestors that when the Shela did flow freely its water was quite drinkable.

There was a well at Godar-i-Chah—hence its name, "the well of Godar"—almost entirely dried up and of water so foul that it was not possible to drink it, and another just as bad was said to exist at Gumbaz.

It would be most interesting if one could get at the actual history of this part of the world and gain an insight into its former prosperity and civilisation. It is quite probable that Alexander, in his progress through Beluchistan and Sistan, must have come through this country. No army—not even with a new Craterus at its head—could, of course, march elephants, camels and horses through that country to-day, and this has led some critics to doubt that Alexander could have done so, or to believe that, if he did so, he must have been deceived by his guides who tried to bring him as far as possible from water. But those critics forget that in Alexander's days this portion of country was extremely civilised, fertile, and supplied with plenty of water—or else how can we account for the innumerable ruins we find there, and for the many canals for irrigation?

Sir Charles McGregor, Goldsmid, Bellew, Major MacMahon, Napier, and one or two others who have visited the country north of the Zirreh, can fully testify to the amazing remains of former prosperity in Sistan and south-west Afghanistan.

Sir Charles McGregor gives an amusing receipt for those who wish to know what the water at Godar-i-Chah is like without having the trouble of going there. "Take the first nasty-looking water you can find. Mix salt with it until it tastes as nasty as it looks, then impregnate it with gas from a London street lamp, and add a little bilge-water, shake vigorously and it is ready for use." Major MacMahon also testifies to the accuracy of the above receipt, but, he adds, "it was not nearly so bad as much we found elsewhere."



IN AFGHANISTAN. WHO ARE YOU?



IN THE AFGHAN DESERT. AFGHAN CARAVAN MEN.

The Zirreh seemed just like a great stretch of country under snow, the thick salt sediment was so beautifully white. It formed a deep depression in the centre. The second deposits to the east of the Zirreh were of a similar shape, with salt extremely thick, but not quite so extensive as in the Zirreh. Near the edge of both dry lakes there was absolutely no vegetation, but most beautifully coloured stones could be found, such as red and brown jasper and agatescent quartz, chalcedony, white and brown limestone.

As I was returning towards the Beluchistan boundary among the sand hills I came upon about a dozen Afghans, who looked as suspiciously at me as I did at them. At first I thought they were soldiers, and as I did not much care to be caught by them and have my goods confiscated—no Englishmen being allowed in their territory—I requested them to stop some way off and explain what they wanted, while I was snapshotting them. They had a great big white fluffy dog with them who seemed very anxious to have a go at the Sahib. One man was asked to come forward alone, which he did with his turban right over his eyes, while the others formed a line behind and appeared most puzzled as to what was going to happen. He said they were glad to see me in their country and that they were "good people," and would not injure nor trouble me in any way; so I gave them a small present, which seemed to please them much, and they became quite friendly. They seemed to have some coarse humour about them and were rather boisterous. Their faces, however, did not quite appeal to me.

The Afghan invariably has a slippery, treacherous look about his countenance which he cannot disguise, and which, personally, I do not much admire. He seldom looks at one straight in the face, can be very sullen when he is not boisterous, and I should think would easily seek cause of offence and pick a quarrel with any one weaker than himself in order to have a fight. These fellows were, for instance, most unlike the gentlemanly Beluch. They shouted at the top of their voices when they spoke, and were uncouth in speech and manner. I was rather glad when they departed.

Further on I came upon more people and animals, but they, too, were quite peaceful.

Having accomplished my object I again crossed over into Beluchistan.

CHAPTER XXXI

Saindak—Beluch prisoners—Thana and Bungalow—Beluch bread—The Saindak mountain and its mineral resources—The Daftan volcano—*Surmah* and lead—Mukak and its strong man—A sick camel—Gypsum—*Regheth*—Where the track will deviate in future—Difficulty in obtaining drinkable water—Wells made attractive—Sahib chah—A well ventilated rest-house.

SAINDAK had an imposing *thana*, the elaborate gateway of which was decorated with heads of wild sheep and *dumbahs*. There were nine rooms—some boasting of wooden doors—at the end of the large court, but all were occupied by the seven *sawars*, the postal *moonshee*, the three *kassildars* and the *havildar*, one *duffadar*, and one *jemadar*.



THE THANA AND NEW BUNGALOW AT SAINDAK. (Saindak Mt. in background.)

On my arrival they proceeded to clear one of the chambers for me, and to my astonishment out of it came four wretched men chained together by the hands and feet and in a pitiable condition. Not that their countenances, when one examined their faces, called for much pity. More palpably criminal types could be found nowhere, but somehow or other to see these poor devils stumbling along, with the iron rings round their bruised and sore ankles showing through the torn rags which covered their skeleton legs, and the agonized expressions on their worn, repulsively cruel faces, was not an edifying sight. They had been brought down here to work and, for prisoners, were treated considerably enough, I suppose. But they seemed very ill and suffering. Two were robbers, the other two—father and son—had murdered a man and stolen 400 sheep. They were condemned to captivity for life.

I declined to put up in that room, especially when I happened to peep in and was nearly choked by the foul odour that emanated from inside, and preferred—although it was very cold—to inhabit the unroofed new two-roomed bungalow in course of construction, which I found really very comfortable.

As can be seen by the photograph the thana and bungalow of Saindak are built on rather an attractive site under the shelter of the Saindak Mountain. Whenever I see a mountain I cannot resist the temptation to go up it, and now, after all the thousands of miles of flat country I had traversed, I felt this desire more strongly than ever. The ascent of the mountain presented no difficulty except that its rocky sides were somewhat steep. I resolved to go up early the next morning before making a start with my camels.

In the meantime during the evening I was instructed by Mahomed Hussein, my camel man, in the Beluch fashion of making bread—really a most ingenious device. A stone of moderate size, say 4 inches in diameter and as round as can be found, is made red hot on the fire, and upon it a coating of paste—flour, water, and salt—is deposited evenly so as to make an envelope of paste one inch thick all over. Three, four, five, or as many of these balls as required being made, they are placed in a circle near a blazing fire, so that the outside may get baked as well as the inside. When ready for consumption the balls are split open and the stones removed. The bread is really most excellent and resembles a biscuit.



BELUCH PRISONERS AT SAINDAK.

At Saindak (altitude 3,810 feet) there are a number of wells, mostly very salt, but one has quite fair water, only slightly brackish. The water, however, had a peculiar taste of its own, as if it had gone through lead deposits, and, on mentioning this to some Beluch they told me that lead was, in fact, found on the mountains just above this camp. Having drunk two glasses of this water I was taken with bad internal pains, but I must in fairness own that I do not know whether to attribute this entirely to the water or to indiscreet consumption of an irresistible, extra rich plum-cake which the wonderful Sadek now produced, much to my surprise and delight, from among my provisions.

Travellers, however, would do well to bring their own supply of water from Kirtaka, if they are coming from Robat, or from Mukak, if travelling from Quetta.

The ascent to the summit of the Saindak mountain well repays the traveller for the exertion of getting there, and that not only on account of its geological formation. Looking over the lower mountains one obtained a magnificent view of the Afghan desert as far as the eye could see, to the north-west and north-east, while to the west lay a mountain mass, the Mirjawa mountains, and innumerable sand hills. To the south-south-west towered above everything the double-humped active volcano of Kuh-i-Daftan, with its snow-capped crater. It was smoking, notwithstanding the ridiculous theory entertained by some F.R.G.S. that volcanoes cannot exist so far south in the Northern Hemisphere! We saw this volcano for several days and it threw up considerable volumes of smoke. At night it occasionally had quite a glow above its crater.

The volcano, I need not say, is in Persian territory, and is some 60 miles distant, as the crow flies, from Saindak, although in the clear atmosphere it does not appear more than a few miles off. It is a

Parallel ridges of sand hills, facing east, were to be seen to the south-west of the Saindak mountain, and then a wide flat plain, beyond which four successive mountain ranges, formed a powerful barrier. To the south-east also were high mountains.

On the top of the mountain we came upon some of the holes that contain lead and *Surmah* or *Surf*—a substance much used by women in Persia, Afghanistan, Beluchistan and India for blackening the lashes and lower eyelids. *Surmah* was plentiful enough, especially between two layers of perpendicular rock, and also in surface pebbles when split open. Calcareous rock with galena was to be found, besides fragments of calcite, gypsum, and slag.

It appeared that the natives must at some time have tried to exploit these mines in a primitive manner, for there were many holes bored all over the top of the mountain, and near them bits of coal embedded in slag. These excavations were generally bored in mounds of yellow earth, or, rather, the mounds were of that colour because of the earth which had been extracted from the borings, the colour of the surrounding earth and rock being grey and black. Lead filaments in brittle layers were also noticeable mixed with the earth. Two inches below the ground one found, on digging, a thick deposit of salt and gypsum.

My camels with loads had made an early start, and on my returning to camp some three hours after their departure I proceeded to catch them up on my excellent *mari*. There was very little of interest on the march. We rose over a gentle incline, travelling due south upon undulating ground to an altitude of 3,870 feet, beyond which we descended into a flat basin with a broad outlet to the south-south-east, and another south-west by a narrow defile in the mountain range. We then crossed a broader plain, about two miles broad, with good grazing for camels, and here again, being well out in the open, we got a magnificent view of the Daftan volcano (south-west) in all its splendour.

We reached Mukak (3,580 feet) in the afternoon, the distance from Saindak being 13 miles, 880 yards, and, owing to my camels being tired, and the small beady plant called *regheth*—much cherished by camels—plentiful, we halted for the remainder of the day.

At this place we found the usual *jemadar*, a *duffadar*, and four men, and were cordially received by the *palawan's* moonshee, a nice fellow who wore a peaked turban of gigantic size, and a brown coat beautifully embroidered on the back and sleeves with violet-coloured silk. The embroidery, he informed me, took six years to make—it was not fully completed yet—and, on inquiring the cost of it, he said that it would certainly fetch as much as 10 rupees (13s. 4d.) when quite finished! The pattern on it was most cleverly designed and produced a graceful effect. On the middle of the sleeves were a number of superposed T's made of ribbon bands and with delicate ornate round them, such as little squares with radiating threads, a frieze going all round the arm, and parallel lines. On the back was a large triangle upside down, the base at the neck and the point downwards, joining at its lower end a square the inside of which was most elaborately embroidered.

The *palawan*, or strong man, in charge of this station, was a man with a romantic history of his own, and perhaps the British Government were very wise to employ him. He is said to possess enormous muscular strength, being able to perform such amazing feats as reducing to dust between his first finger and thumb a silver rupee by merely rubbing it once, or breaking any coin in two in his hands with the same ease that one would a biscuit. Aid Mahomed, that was his name, was unfortunately absent on the day I passed through, so I was not able to witness his marvellous feats—of strength or palming(?)—and the accounts of his native admirers were not to be taken *au pied de la lettre*.

Mukak had six mud rooms, three roofed over and the others unroofed. Water was plentiful but slightly brackish, and a salt rivulet, a few inches broad, irrigated a patch or two of cultivation below the rest house.

Among low hills, we rode away first due east from Mukak, the track at a mile's distance rising to 3,620 feet, and we remained at this altitude for five miles. Again on this march we obtained a glorious view (at 200° b.m.) of the Daftan volcano, with its two imposing white domes on the crater sides. We had then gone north-east for 6½ miles, when, after rounding some sand hills, our track proceeded again due east.

We had crossed a plain one mile broad and four and a half miles long, where there was good grazing (*regheth*) for camels, but no tamarisk. At the termination of the plateau, which rose some 50 feet higher than the remainder of it, we commenced to descend by a gentle incline, having high hills to our left (north) and low hills to our right (south), the track being due east. To the north-east we had another long, straight, monotonous spread of fine sand and gravel in slight undulations, and to the south-west very low ranges of sand hills varying in height from 20 feet to 100 feet. Before us on our left to 100 bearings magnetic (E.E.S.E.) stood above the plain a pillar-shaped mound of enormous height resembling, from a distance, a semi-ruined tower, and south-south-east (150° b.m.) another isolated red mountain with a sharp, needle-like point. Other smaller rocks, of sugar-loaf form, were scattered about on our left.

By the roadside an enormous boulder weighing several tons could be seen, the presence of which could not easily be accounted for unless it had been shot out by volcanic action. It was most unlike the formation of the rock in the immediate neighbourhood of it, and had all the appearance of having dropped at this place.

The track again changed its course and now went to east-south-east, (120° b.m.). My riding camel was taken very ill, and even Mahomed's most affectionate language, and the caresses he bestowed on him as if the animal had been his dearest relation, had no appreciable effect upon his health. The animal evidently had a colic, caused, no doubt, by excessive eating of *regheth* the previous day. He seemed to have the greatest trouble in dragging his legs along, and every now and then he languidly swung his head round and gave me a reproachful look, which undoubtedly meant "Can't you see I am ill? I wish you would get off."

Well, I did get off, although walking in the desert is not a pleasure at any time, and when we arrived at the next well, after a dreadfully slow march, we proceeded to doctor up our long-necked patient.

Now, doctoring a camel is not an easy matter, for one cannot work on his imagination as doctors do on human beings. When a camel is ill, he is really ill. There was no mistake about the symptoms of his complaint, and after a consultation Sadek, Mahomed and I agreed that a strong solution of salt and water should be administered, which was easier said than done. While the poor brute lay with

his long neck stretched upon the sand, moaning, groaning and breathing heavily, we mixed a bag of salt—all we had—with half a bucket of water, and after endless trouble—for our patient was most recalcitrant—poured the contents down his throat.



INTERIOR OF REST HOUSE, MUKAK.



THE REST HOUSE AT SAHIB CHAH.

We had some moments of great anxiety, for the animal was taken with a fit. He fell on his side, his legs quivered three or four times, and for one moment we really thought our remedy had killed him. The medicine, however, had the desired effect, and about an hour later the camel was again as lively as a cricket, and we were able to continue.

The reader may perhaps gauge what the loss of a camel would have been when he is told that between Sher-i-Nasrya, Sistan, and Nushki—a journey of some 500 miles—neither camels nor any other mode of conveyance are, under ordinary circumstances, to be procured.

We passed a conical hill, by the roadside, which had thick deposits of gypsum on the south-east side of its base, while on the north-west side the process of petrification of the sand was fully illustrated. The thin surface layer when moist gets baked by the sun, and thus begins its process of solidification; then another layer of sand is deposited on it by the wind and undergoes the same process, forming the thin, horizontal strata so common in the section of all these hills. The lower strata get gradually harder and harder, but those nearer the surface can be easily crumbled into sand again by pressure between one's fingers.

These were the main altitudes registered on the day's march: Plain, 3,220 feet; 16 miles from Mukak, 3,200 feet; while a mile and a half further we had gone as low as 2,500 feet on a wide plain with undulations. The rocky mountain, when seen edgewise from a distance, had appeared like a tower; now, on approaching it on its broad side, its silhouette altered its semblance into that of an elongated crouching lion.

Great quantities of gypsum could be seen in layers under the sand and fragments that covered the surface. In places the ground was quite white as if with snow. The track, until we had passed the isolated "lion" mountain (about 20 miles from Mukak), maintained a direction of east, east-south-east, and south-east, but about a mile further, it turned sharply northwards in a bed of soft sand, between sand mounds to the north-east and a sand bank facing north, the top of which, full of humps, was not unlike a crocodile's back.

To the right we had an open space where one got a view of the desert and mountains to the south, and then we wended our way, in zig-zag, among sand hills bearing no unusual characteristics, and travelled across a very sandy plain with clusters of *regheth* here and there.

This was one of the worst bits of the Robat-Nushki road. The sand was troublesome and the track absolutely obliterated by it in this portion. Twenty-three miles, 660 yards from Mukak we arrived at Sahib Chah, a spot which no traveller is ever likely to forget, especially if a few drops of water from one of the wells are tasted. When the road was made it was very difficult to find drinkable water in this part, and this well—renowned all over Beluchistan and Sistan for its magic powers—has up to the present time been the only successful attempt; but I understand from Captain Webb-Ware, who is in charge of the road, that he hopes to find or has found water further north, on the other side of the hill range, and that in future the traveller will be spared the good fortune of visiting this heavenly spot.

Most attractive iron troughs had been brought here and placed near the four wells, and up-to-date wooden windlasses had been erected on the edge of each well—conveniences that were not quite so common at the stations we had already passed. This may lead the unwary traveller to believe that the water of these wells must have some special charm.

One well was, fortunately, absolutely dry. The water of two was so powerful in its lightning effects that unfortunate was the wretch who succumbed to the temptation of tasting it; while the water of the fourth well, one was told, was of a quite good drinking kind. I had been warned not to touch it, but my men and camels drank some and it had equally disastrous effects on men and beasts. Sadek, who was requested to experiment and report on such occasions, thought his last hour had come, and he and the camel men moaned and groaned the greater part of the night. The water seemed not only saturated with salt, but tasted of lead and phosphorus, and was a most violent purgative.

The rest-house could not be called luxurious; the reader is referred to the photograph I took of it facing page [332](#). It was roofless—which, personally, I did not mind—and the walls just high enough to screen one from the wind and sand. It was in two compartments, the wall of one being $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet high, and of the other about 7 feet high, while 15 feet by 8 feet, and 10 feet by 8 feet were the respective dimensions of each section.

The place lies in the middle of a valley amid hills of chalk or gypsum and deep soft sand, and is screened by a low hill range to the north-east and north, while a low flat-topped sand dune protects it on the south-west. The new track, I believe, will go north of the north-east range.

CHAPTER XXXII

Sick men and camels—What came of photographing Sahib Chah—Losing the track
—Divided opinions—Allah *versus* the compass—Sadek's way of locating positions
—Picked up hungry and thirsty by sensible Mahomed who had come in search—
Curious scenery—Trouble at Mirjawa—Mythical Perso-Beluch frontier—Gypsum
and limestone—Mushki Chah.

As all my camels as well as my men had been very sick during the night; as we had a long march before us the following day, and as I wished to take a photograph of the place, I resolved not to leave until the sun had risen, and in order to avoid delay I despatched all the camels and loads, except my camera, at four o'clock in the morning, meaning to walk some ten or fifteen miles, and thus give my own camel a rest. Sadek, who said it was not right for a servant to ride when his master walked, refused to go on with the caravan and insisted on remaining with me.

When the camels left—there was a cutting northerly wind blowing raising clouds of sand—I retreated to the shelter to wait for the sun to rise, and had a few hours' sleep in a solitary blanket I had retained. The track had so far been so well defined that I never thought of asking Mahomed which way it led out of these hills.

The sun having risen, and the photograph of Sahib Chah shelter duly taken, we proceeded to catch up the camels, but a few yards from the shelter all signs of the track ceased, and even the footprints of my camels had been absolutely obliterated by the high wind of the morning. To the east-south-east were rather high rocky hills and two passes, one going round to the north-north-east (which apparently would take us away from our direction), and another east-south-east, which seemed more likely to be the right one. To mislead us more we saw what we believed to be faint camel tracks smothered in sand in this direction, so on we went, sinking in fine sand, which kept filling our shoes and made walking most uncomfortable.

I climbed to the top of the rocky hill to reconnoitre, but higher hills stood all round barring the view, and I was none the wiser. On we went—certain that we were going wrong, but unable to find where the track was. Among hundreds of sand hills, dunes, and high parallel hill ranges it was not easy to discover it.

There were flat stretches of sand and parallel dunes several hundred feet high stretching from north by north-west to south by south-east, and as I knew the way must be east we had to go over them, down on the other side, only to be confronted with others before us like the waves of a stormy sea.

The sun was scorching, and when the sand got hot, too, walking was most unpleasant. When we were not on sand while ascending the hill slopes and tops we were on cutting shale. Sadek, who had not yet recovered from his previous night's experience at Sahib Chah, was still sick, and with the extra exertion somehow or other lost his head altogether.

After having gone up and down, I should not like to say how many times, we were confronted by a flat valley to the south-west and more mountains to be crossed in the direction we were going, to the north-east. Sadek thereupon maintained that the track must force be along the valley, to which I would not agree, and I insisted on keeping east, which I knew would bring us right in the end. As we climbed hill after hill, Sadek dragged himself behind me with a disconsolate face, every few minutes glancing back at the distant flat valley to the south-west, to which he pointed, sighing: "Good master, that's road!"

But up and down we continued, away from it, eastwards, range after range of hills being left behind and more ranges standing in front of us. Sadek, who was sweating under the weight of the rifle and camera, grumbled that he was ill and tired, hungry and thirsty, and it was very little consolation to think that from this spot, the two nearest wells of drinkable water were distant one about twenty-eight miles, the other over forty miles. We had nothing whatever with us to eat or drink.

After some three hours of uncertainty—and I must confess that it was somewhat trying each time we had reached the top of a range, which we climbed with anxious enthusiasm, expecting to get a glimpse of the track, to find our view obstructed by yet another range, generally higher than the one on which we stood,—after hours of toiling, as I was saying, we now came to a rocky range about double the height of any we had climbed so far.

Sadek, on looking at it, declined to climb any more. He said he knew the track must be in the opposite direction and we should only have to climb all these hills back again. He sat down and puffed away at cigarettes to allay his hunger and thirst and soothe his temper, while I climbed to the highest point, some 480 feet, above the point where I had left Sadek. Behold! on reaching the summit, beyond another range lower to the north, along a wide undulating plain I did discern a whitish streak like a chalk line stretching from west to east,—unmistakably the road.

I signalled the news to Sadek, and shouted to him to come up, which he most reluctantly did. When panting half-way up the hill, he still turned round to the south-west and disconsolately exclaimed, "No can be road, my good master. That is road!" (to the south-west). I ordered him to hurry up to my point of vantage and see for himself.

"May be road, may be not road," was his obstinate verdict, when the white streak across the plain was triumphantly pointed out to him.

"But, Sadek, can you not see the white perfectly straight line stretching along, straighter than anything else around you?"

"I can see plenty white lines, master. *Up-stairs* mountains, *down-stairs* mountains"—(by which he meant gypsum strata on the top and foot of hills). "May be," he added, sarcastically, "all roads to Shalkot (Quetta)!"

"Can you not see that the white track leads exactly in the direction where my compass says we must go?"

"Pfff! Compass no good!" he exclaimed with an air of amusing superiority, and he stooped to pick two pebbles of different colours. "Take one of these in one hand, and one in the other," he asked of me. "Now throw one towards the east and one towards the west."

I having for curiosity's sake complied with his request, he gravely examined the discarded stones.

"Yes, Sahib, your compass speaks truth! Allah says yours is the right road!"

On requesting an explanation of this novel method of locating positions, Sadek looked very solemn, and with a pause, as if he were about to pour forth words of great wisdom, and disregarding altogether the fact that my efforts solely and simply were responsible for discovering the track, "You see, my master," he said, "one stone I called *good road*, the other I called *no road*. Whichever stone you throw first is Allah's wish. Allah is more right than compass."

At any rate the method was simple enough, and it fortunately happened that Allah and my compass seemed in agreement on that occasion; so adding these circumstances to the more substantial fact that we could see the track plainly before us, we gaily descended from our lofty pinnacle, and with renewed vigour climbed the lower and last hill range, the last obstacle before us.

In the trough between the two ranges, however, the fine sand was extremely nasty, almost as bad as quicksand, and we had some trouble in extricating ourselves. We sank into it almost up to the waist. We then crossed the broad plain in a diagonal for nearly four miles, and at last, after some seven hours of anxiety, not to speak of hunger and thirst, we struck the road again.

Sadek, who, notwithstanding Allah's patent method, my compass bearings, and our combined eyesight, was not at all certain in his own heart that we should find the road that day, was so overcome with joy when he actually recognised my camel's footprints upon the sand, where not obliterated by the wind, that he collapsed upon the ground from fatigue and strain, and slept snoring sonorously for nearly two hours.

As luck would have it, a Beluch horseman travelling towards Mushki-Chah had overtaken my camels, and much to Mahomed's astonishment, informed him that he had not seen the Sahib on the road, so Mahomed, fearing that something had happened, had the sense to turn back with two camels to try and find us. We were very glad of a lift when he arrived, and even more glad to partake of a hearty lunch, and a long, long drink of water, which although brackish tasted quite delicious, from one of the skins.

The track was like a whitish streak on a sombre grey valley, with black hills scattered here and there, and a most peculiar dome-like hill on our left (10° b.m.) towards the north. Eastwards we could see a long flat high table mountain, not unlike Kuh-i-Kwajah of Sistan. On our right were low, much broken-up hills; to the west, low sand hillocks, and facing us, north-east-east (80° b.m.) a low black hill range standing in front of some high and very pointed peaks. To the south-east there was an open space.

We made a diagonal crossing over several sand dunes that stood from 50 to 80 feet high, and extended to a great length southwards. Then we approached the curious-domed hill. It was of a warm reddish-brown colour, with a yellow belt of sand at its base, and half-a-dozen sugar-loaf sand hills to the west of it. To the east of it rose the flat-topped plateau, yellowish at the two extremities, as one looked at it from this point, and black in the centre. On the north-east (at 70° b.m.) was a pointed peak, perfectly conical.

It was a very long march to Mushki-Chah, and we had a few mild excitements on the road. We came across some picturesque Beluch, clothed in flowing white robes, and carrying long matchlocks with a fuse wound round the stock. They were extremely civil, all insisting on shaking hands in a most hearty fashion, and seeming very jolly after they had gravely gone through the elaborate salutation which always occupies a considerable time.

Further on we met a cavalcade, which included the Naib Tashildar of Mirjawa, an Afghan in British employ, and the *duffadar* of Dalbandin, the latter a most striking figure with long curly hair hanging over his shoulders. They were with some levies hastening to Mirjawa, an important place, which, owing to the ridiculous fashion in which the Perso-Beluch Commission under Sir T. Holdich had marked out the frontier, was now claimed both by Persia and Beluchistan as making part of their respective territories.

When I was at the Perso-Beluch frontier there was much ado about this matter, and some trouble may be expected sooner or later. Anybody who happens to know a few facts about the way in which the frontier line was drawn must regret that England should not employ upon such important missions sensible and capable men whose knowledge of the country is thorough.

It would, no doubt, be very interesting to the public to be told in detail *exactly how* the frontier was fixed, and whether Sir T. Holdich, who was in charge, *ever* visited the whole frontier line. The Government maps which existed at the time of the frontier demarcation were too inaccurate to be of any use, as has been proved over and over again to our sorrow. It would also be interesting to know whether the astronomical positions of some of the supposed principal points of the boundary have been accurately tested, and whether some points which had been corrected by really efficient officers

have been omitted, if not suppressed, in order to cover certain discrepancies. And if so whether it was an expedient to avoid showing the weakness of the maps (on which certain names figure prominently) which were taken as a basis for the delineation?

The facts are too commonly known by all the officers in Beluchistan and by the Foreign Office in Calcutta, as well as by Persians, to be kept a secret. It is painful to have to register facts of this kind, but I most certainly think it is the duty of any Englishman to expose the deeds of men who obtain high sounding posts and can only manage to keep them by intrigue and by suppressing the straightforward work of really able officers (which does not agree with theirs) to the eventual expense and loss of the country at large.

As we went along, leaving the plain which we had crossed for some fifteen miles, we saw to the south-west large white patches like snow. These were made of gypsum and white limestone covering the ground. A curious long, low, flat hill, with hundreds of vertical black streaks at its base and a black summit, resembled a gigantic centipede crawling on the flat desert. At the eastern end of the long plain were mud-hills on the left side of the track, and black, isolated, rounded mounds on the right. To the south-east a very curious mountain could be seen, one side of which was of beautiful white and yellow marble, and from this spot we crossed hills of sand and gravel, and the track was more tortuous, but still travelling in a general direction of east-south-east (110° b.m.)

Other mountains there were, entirely of white marble, and a great many beautifully tinted fragments of marble, as well as yellow alabaster, were strewn about abundantly upon the ground. We travelled among hillocks for about seven and a half miles, then emerged again into a plain with a hill range to our left, but nothing near us on the south. At the entrance of the valley on our left stood a curious high natural stone pillar.

By moonlight, but with clouds fast gathering and threatening rain, we eventually reached Mushki-Chah at about ten in the evening, having travelled some 36 miles. The distance by road from Sahib Chah would have been 28 miles 660 yards. Here we found the remainder of my caravan which had arrived some hours previously.

CHAPTER XXXIII

Mushki-Chah—A Ziarat—Beluch dwellings—The Beluch and the camera—Characteristics of Beluch—Three wells of good water at Kundi—The Kuh-i-Sultan and the "Spear of the Sultan"—A big Ziarat at Kundi—Nineteen hours on the saddle—Tretoh—Cold wind—Parallel rows of sand barchans—Startling effect of mirage—Chah Sandan—Brahui salutation—Belind Khan and his good points—A respected officer—Praying at the Ziarat.

MUSHKI-CHAH (3,570 feet) is rather more interesting than other stations we had passed, because of the greater number of Beluch one saw about. Here, too, however, one's sojourning had to be curtailed, for unluckily the water was not only brackish—to which one does not object so much—but had a sulphurous taste, with a sickening smell—not dissimilar from that of an old-fashioned hospital ward, when the windows have not been opened for several days. Otherwise it had no drawback.

There were four filthy pools from which water was obtainable and which reminded us of a previous experience at Girdi in Sistan. The water of one well had a nasty green coating on the surface; the second was of a deep yellow colour. The other two wells were slightly cleaner but they, too, were of a suspicious colour—that of strong tea. A cluster of a dozen palm trees or so had grown near this water, and a little way beyond on a sand and gravel bank was a Ziarat with a low surrounding wall of black stones.

The Ziarat was of an ovoid shape, it just missed being circular, about 18 feet long and 16 feet broad. An entrance had been made to the east and a sort of altar constructed to the west by north west—which is about the accurate direction of Mecca from this spot. A high pole on which flew red, white, and blue rags was fixed into the altar. The altar—if one may call it so—was a mass of blocks of beautifully coloured marble. Some pieces resembled the best Sienna marble, others were capriciously streaked in white and dark brown; other large pieces were quite transparent and resembled large blocks of camphor or ice. Others were more granular, like lumps of frozen snow. Then there were some lovely bits of a greenish yellow marble and some brown. These beautiful stones and pieces of marble were brought to these Ziarats from great distances by devotees. Stones reduced by nature into queer shapes, hollowed for instance by the action of sand or water, perfectly spherical, or strikingly coloured were favourite offerings.

At this particular Ziarat, a small marble mortar with pestle and a marble hammer, occupied the most prominent place. A flint arrow head was also in evidence. Further was perched a curious doll with a string and charm round its neck, and some chips of beautiful transparent streaked yellow marble like bits of lemon. From the pole hung a circle of wood and horns, as well as coarse wooden imitations of horned animals' skulls. Offerings of palm leaves had also been deposited.

West of the Ziarat was a small semicircular Mesjid of brown stone, with a few white marble pieces to the north by north-west, and, further, long heaps of stones extending in a north by north-west direction. The last one was in the shape of a grave with a high white stone pillar to the south.

The new bungalow, of which the foundations were just being laid, will be erected near this Ziarat.

Quite a number of Beluch were settled at Mushki-Chah, and some lived in small quadrangular mud houses, with a black tent stretched over the walls to act as roof; or else they had put up coarse huts made of branches of tamarisk and thatched with palm tree leaves and tamarisk, in which they lived—apparently in the most abject poverty. Yet, although these residences were often not higher than five or six feet, their owners did not lack pride. In Beluchistan as in England, the home of a man is his castle. The Beluch, however—most unlike the English—would not let anybody who did not belong to his creed go into it.

The occupations of the stay-at-home people did not seem to have an excess of variety, and consisted mainly of plaiting fuses for their matchlocks, keeping the threads tightly stretched by means of a

wooden bow. There were but few coarse implements inside their huts, and a bag or two with grain. A long matchlock and a sword or two lay in a corner in most dwellings, and that was about all.

The house of the chief was somewhat more elaborate, having trunks of palm trees inserted vertically into the stone wall to strengthen it. It had a mud and stone enclosing wall, and trophies of heads of *dumbahs* near the flat roof. In one room of this dwelling lived the family, in the other the animals. An out-of-door enclosure for horses was also noticeable. Two mud huts were next to it.

The thatched semispherical huts of palm tree leaves and tamarisk were also interesting, as was the windmill, identical with those already seen in Sistan.

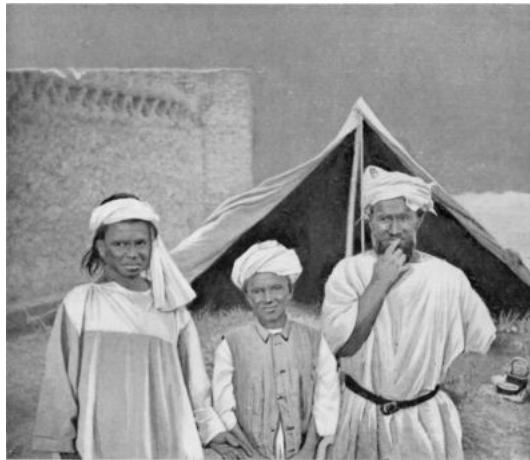
On my arrival at Mushki-Chah two large tents had been placed at my disposal—the first time I had been under a tent on this journey—and I received a great many callers. A very amusing incident occurred when I asked an old Beluch and his two sons to sit for their photographs. They put on a sarcastic smile and said they would rather die a natural death than be taken. The old man, who said he had heard all about "the black boxes," as he styled cameras, and all the mischief they could do, complained that since one or two sahibs had passed along the route carrying "black boxes" a great many Beluch had been taken ill, had misfortunes of all kinds, and those who actually had the camera pointed at them had died from the effects. One sahib had offered him, personally, a bag of silver if he would only sit for his picture, but "No, sir, not I!" said the father, as he shook his head and scratched his beard; and "No, sir, not we!" echoed the grinning youths, "never shall we be taken!"

Before they knew where they were, and without any suspicion on their part, I had, by a dodge of my own, taken three photographs of them, the best of which is reproduced facing page [350](#).

They were rather characteristic types of the lower class Beluch of northern Beluchistan. They possessed very quick, bright, shining eyes, dark complexions and long noses, very broad at the base. The mouth was generally the worst feature in their faces, the upper lip being drawn very tight over the teeth and giving rather a brutal expression to their countenances. The men were very powerfully built, thick-set, with ribs well covered with muscle and fat, powerful, coarse wrists and ankles, and square-shaped hands with short stumpy thumbs.



WINDMILL AT MUSHKI CHAH.



THREE BELUCH WHO WOULD NOT BE PHOTOGRAPHED!

Their attire was simple; a sort of long white cotton blouse buttoned over the right shoulder and ample trousers of the same material. Many, however, wore a felt "overcoat"—or rather, "overskin," for there was no other garment underneath. A white turban was worn wound round the head.

A *duffadar*, six *sawars* and six camels were stationed at Mushki-Chah.

I left Mushki-Chah on January 21st at 3.30 A.M., my camels with loads having started some hours previously, and our way lay for eight miles due east, first over sand hills and undulations, then on a perfectly straight and level track. To the south we had a barren waste of flat desert. We then veered east-south-east (110° b.m.), and fifteen miles off turned slightly further to the south-east (120° b.m.). To the north-north-east we had a mountain range.

On nearing Kundi we found tamarisk plentiful and good grazing for camels. Some of the tamarisk trees were 10 feet high. The march was a very cold one, a north-north-west gale blowing fiercely and penetrating right through our clothes and flesh to the marrow of our bones.

Three wells of good water were found 1½ miles before reaching Kundi. The rest-house was uninhabited and fast tumbling down. In 21 miles 1,100 yards we had slightly risen to 3,660 feet, and

this point is one which remains well impressed on one's mind, partly on account of the splendid view obtained of the Sultan Mountains to the north-east—a gloomy black mass with the highest peak of a light red colour. The Kuh-i-Sultan is a most weirdly fantastic mountain range. Sir Charles McGregor, who saw these mountains from a distance, speaks of them as the "oddest-looking mountains he had ever seen."

But the best description is that given by Major A. H. MacMahon, who was, I believe, the first European to explore the range. Approaching it from the north he, too, was struck by the grotesque shape of its numerous sharp peaks; above all by the Neza-i-Sultan—"the spear of the Sultan"—an enormous rocky pillar of hard conglomerate, roughly resembling a slender sugar-loaf with tapering summit, and precipitous sides, that rise on the crest line of the range.

"The fissures," MacMahon says, "made by rain and weather action down its sides give it a fluted appearance from a distance. We expected to find a high natural pillar, but were not prepared for the stupendous size of the reality. Judging from its width at the base, which is over 100 yards in diameter, the height must be no less than from 500 to 800 feet. The Sultan, in whose honour this range is named, is an ancient mythical celebrity, who is said to be buried in the vicinity of the mountains. His full name is Sultan-i-Pir-Khaisar, and he is the patron saint of Beluch robbers. Hence these mountains have a reputation as a robber resort. The Sultan Mountains abound in the asafoetida plant, and in the summer months traders come in numbers from Afghanistan to collect it."

I was in a great hurry to return to England, and could not afford the detour entailed by going near enough to photograph the "Spear." Besides, Major MacMahon gives a capital photograph of it in the *Royal Geographical Society's Journal*.

At Kundi, a big Ziarat, with many trunks of tamarisk trees, some 10 feet high, supporting bleached horns, has been erected to the Kuh-i-Sultan. Hundreds of beautiful pieces of marble and alabaster of all sizes, colours and shapes have been deposited here, as usual, but the sand is fast covering the whole Ziarat.

From Kundi the track, which has come in a south-east-east (120° b.m.) direction, now turned sharply to north-east (60° b.m.). Ten high mud and stone *neshans*—or *Tejia* (cairns) as they are called by the Beluch—have been erected to warn the traveller. Four curious mounds with tufts of high tamarisk trees upon them are to be seen at Kundi. There is fair grazing for camels all along. One is specially attracted by the peculiar stones corroded into all sorts of shapes, strewn all over the ground.

We made a double march on that day, and—barring the quaint Sultan Mountains which we saw all along—had but a very flat uninteresting country all round.

We arrived during the evening at Tretoh, having been nineteen hours on the saddle. It was bitterly cold at night, the drop in the temperature being very great immediately after the sun went down. At this station, too, the water tasted very bad—almost undrinkable—but was not necessarily unwholesome. We were glad to get into the thana and light up a big fire in the centre of one of the mud rooms, but no sooner had we done this than it got so hot that I had to find a cooler abode in the new bungalow in course of construction, which had not yet a roof.

It was always a marvel to me how the natives could stand the great heat in the rooms with no draught for the smoke and heat to get away. It positively roasted one alive, but my men seemed to revel in it. On the other hand they suffered from the cold to a degree that was also unaccountable to me. On many occasions I have heard my camel-driver moan from pain in his frozen toes and fingers, but, true enough, when out in the open desert the wind was rather penetrating, and his clothes, barring a waistcoat, consisted of thin white cotton garments. Personally, I never had occasion to make a change in my tropical clothing (I could not if I had wanted to), nor did I ever once have to use an overcoat. But—I seldom know what it is to feel cold.

We delayed our departure the next morning to see if the gale would abate, but at 10 A.M. we had to venture out. One was rather at the mercy of the wind on the hump of the camel. It did blow! The wind hampered the camels greatly and was a nuisance all round, as one could only by an effort remain on the saddle. The flying sand filled one's eyes and ears, and the wind catching the brim of one's hat made such a hissing noise that one had to find a more comfortable headgear by wrapping up one's head in a blanket.

The desert was here absolutely flat, with some grazing for camels (*kirri*). We were going north-east-east (70° b.m.) amid low sand hillocks and sand banks, and the Sultan Mountain still on our left in all its glory. To the north-east (55° b.m.) we had another mountain mass lower than the Sultan and not nearly so picturesque, and before us, on going over a gentle incline some 35 ft. above the level of the plain (about 13 miles from Tretoh), three long rows of bright yellow, flat-topped, crescent-shaped sand-hills stretching for several miles from north to south were disclosed. These three rows of barchans were parallel, and at intervals of about from 300 yards to 500 yards from one another. The barchans averaged from 50 ft. to 100 ft. in height. Another row of them stretched along the foot of the mountain range to the north and extended from north-west to south-east.

The cause of these extensive parallel rows of barchans was to be found in gaps in the hills to the north between the Sultan, the next range, and two intervening obstacles in the shape of a low mound and a great rock, the sand being blown through the interstices and gradually accumulating in the plain on the south.

On that march we saw a most extraordinary effect of mirage. To the east (100° b.m.) the peculiar flat-topped Gat (or Gut) Mountain, which looked like a gigantic lamp-shade, could be seen apparently suspended in the air. The illusion was perfect, and most startling to any one with teetotal habits. Of course the optical illusion was caused by the different temperatures in the layers of air directly over the earth's surface and the one above it. Where the two layers met they deviated at an angle, or practically interrupted what would, under ordinary circumstances, be direct rays of vision. (The same effect, in other words, as produced by placing a stick vertically in water.) The real horizon was obliterated, as well as the lower part of the mountain, by the white haze caused by the warm lower layer of air.

Some nineteen miles from Tretoh, where the hill range to the north became low, a few sand hills were to be seen, then where another gap existed in the range yet another long row of barchans stretched southwards. A mile or so beyond this spot a long sand and gravel bank stretched across the

plain from north-north-east to south-south-west and near Chah Sandan another similar bank existed, fifty feet high, parallel to the first.

At Chah Sandan (altitude 3,380 ft.) we were most enthusiastically received by the *duffadar*, who was politeness itself. The Beluch salutation is somewhat lengthy. In the Ba-roh-iya or Brahui language, as spoken in north Beluchistan where I was travelling, it sounds thus:—"Shar joroz druakha joroz haire meretus me murev huaja khana," after which the persons greeting seize each other's hands and raise them to the forehead, bowing low. Inquiries follow about the *mulk* or countries one has crossed on one's journey, and whether the people have treated one kindly.

The *duffadar* at Chah Sandan was an Afghan, Belind Khan by name, and had the following good points about him. He was a most sportsmanlike fellow; was very bright, civil and intelligent, and owned chickens that laid delicious eggs. He possessed a beautiful dog to which he was passionately attached, and he and his brother had a greater capacity for tea than almost any men I have known. Above all, Belind Khan had intense admiration for the British and what they did, and as for Captain Webb-Ware, his superior officer, he pronounced him to be the greatest "Bahadur" that ever lived. "Even in my own country (Afghanistan)," he exclaimed, raising his right hand in the air, "there is no 'Bahadur' like him!"

This was not pure flattery but it was truly meant, and it was most pleasant to find that such was the opinion, not only of Belind Khan, but of every one of Captain Webb-Ware's subordinates on the entire length of the road from the frontier to Quetta.

There is a *thana* of three rooms at Chah Sandan and a Ziarat to the Sultan Mountain. I took a photograph of Belind Khan making his salaams in the Ziarat, the altar of which was made of a pile of white marble pieces and rounded stones with sticks on which horns and a red rag had been fixed.

Chah Sandan possessed three wells of excellent water. The distance from Tretoh to Chah Sandan was 23 miles 760 yards.

CHAPTER XXXIV

The picturesque Gat mountain—Strange-looking mountains—Mirui—White covered country—Sotag—Desolate shed at Chakal—The *Karenghi rirri* deadly plant—The Mesjid or Masit—Their characteristics—The religion of Beluch—Sects—Superstitions—The symbol of evil—A knife "possessed"—A Beluch's idea of a filter.

DUE east of Chah Sandan was the Gat mountain, this time, as there was no mirage, duly resting upon the desert. It was a most attractive looking mountain, and quite one of the most striking sights in the scenery upon the Nushki-Robat road.

Five miles from Chah Sandan we again struck high, flat-topped sandbanks, and a great many conical sand hills. Ten miles off we went through a cut in the hills near which are to be found a well of brackish water and a great many palm trees, of two kinds (*Pish* and *Metah*). Big tamarisks (*kirri*) were also abundant, and there was good grazing for camels, *regheth* being plentiful. Near the salt well stood a gigantic palm tree.

We had come east-north-east (70° b.m.) from Chah Sandan, and from this, our nearest point to the Gat mountain, the track turned east-south-east (110° b.m.). One really had to halt to look at the Gat, it was so impressive. Two enormous blocks of rock several hundred feet high, one, roughly speaking, of a quadrangular shape (to the north) and one rectangular (to the south), were joined on the east side by a perpendicular wall of solid rock. Up to about two-thirds of the height of the mountain these huge blocks had accumulations of debris and sand, forming a slanting pad all round except on the west side, where there was a sort of hollow recess.

There was a large plain with good camel grazing to the east-south-east, bounded from east to south by a semicircle of low hills.

After leaving Gat there was nothing of interest on the march. Another extensive sand bank, 50 feet high, forming the eastern part of the hilly semicircle above mentioned, was crossed, then we were in a barren valley. Further on, however, after going over yet another sand dune (extending from north to south) we entered one more plain, this time absolutely covered with low palm trees. From this plain we began to rise in order to cross the hill range that stood before us, and here there were innumerable sand hills and sand banks, the latter facing north.

Near Mirui one found one's self among strange-looking mountains, some like huge waves of sand, debris, and shale; one to the left, a huge flat-topped mass in horizontal well-marked strata, while further on was a third, a most perfect cone. Behind this to the south lay a mass of lower pointed conical sand hills.

Mirui being one of the more important stages on the road, a most comfortable large bungalow has been erected here, like the one at Robat, with four rooms and four bath rooms, kitchens, etc. The water is very good at this place; there is a shop with the usual supplies for caravans, and a staff consisting of a *jemadar*, a *duffadar*, one postal moonshee, seven *sawars*, four *hasildars*, one *havildar*. The bungalow at Mirui is most picturesquely situated among the quaint mountains, and the six-roomed *thana* some little distance below, against the mountain side, looks quite formidable. It not only has high towers at the corners of the wall, but possesses an additional watch tower erected on the top of the mountain, commanding a fine view of the country around. Before it, surrounded by hills, spreads a valley from north to south, which the track crosses in a south-south-west direction among palms and plentiful high tamarisks.

The bungalow stood at an altitude of 3,500 feet, the valley where the *thana* was situated was one hundred feet lower (3,400 feet), and the steep although not high pass by which we left the valley 3,550 feet.

A short zig-zag led us into a second valley with a sand bank barring our way directly in front to the south-east (125° b.m.), the direction of the track. For a change we had high precipitous cliffs on the north and a low range of sand hills extending from north-north-east to south-south-west. Two very

lofty isolated peaks broke the monotony of the horizon line to the north-east (to 70° and 80° respectively). Having crossed a third and a fourth plain, two barren, the other at the foot of a sandbank with plenty of tamarisk, the track, which for a short distance went east, turned suddenly to the north-east (70° b.m.).

We had now a great expanse of open country before us with abundant tamarisk, palm trees, and *eshwark*, which made capital grazing for camels. Three high red mounds stood respectively to the south-east, south, and south-west, while almost north (350°) the two high pointed conical peaks we had observed on the previous march were again visible. On the south-east there was quite a high mountain range.

This was a region of sand banks, all facing north, only one out of the lot spreading in a south-south-west direction, and of semi-spherical sand hills which were also numerous.

On getting near Sotag the sandy ground was so covered with gypsum that for some distance it looked just as if it had snowed. The photograph reproduced in the illustration gives a good idea of the scenery in that part.

Some three and a half miles from Sotag a gap in the hills afforded a view of an extensive plain to the south, with innumerable reddish-yellow sand hills, and a range of high mountains far away beyond. From this point the track rises gently over an undulation about 88 feet higher than the plain, and on the other side undulations continue, and nothing whatever is to be seen except the same range of hills to the south, with its peaks assuming pyramidal shapes toward the eastern portion.



ZIARAT AT CHAH SANDAN. (Behind Khan Salaaming.)



DESERT COVERED WITH GYPSUM, NEAR SOTAG.

We passed the salt well of Jujiki about half way between the two stations, and arrived at the desolate shed of Chakal at nine in the evening, where the thatched roofs of two out of three of the rooms had been torn down to supply fuel to travellers. There is only a salt well at this place, but some two miles off the road a well of good water has been dug, near which a new bungalow has been erected.

But as we arrived late, having done a double march—

Mirui to Sotag	12 miles	1,320 yards
Sotag to Chakal	14 "	220 "
<hr/>		
Total	26 miles	1,540 yards

—and as I intended moreover continuing to Dalbandin after three hours' rest, I did not avail myself of the convenience. We had carried a supply of good water with us. There was no wood here nor grazing for camels, but both fuel and food for the animals can be obtained at the Bungalow.

Chakal was at the identical altitude of Mirui, 3,600 feet.

My camels with loads left at midnight, and some two hours later I followed. This was a most uninteresting march in a north-east by east (70°) direction with sand hills on either side of the track, and high distant mountains to the south—a red stretch of flat sand between extending all along from north-east to south-west. When there were no more sand hills we came to sand banks, which made the track undulating like a switchback railway.

Our attention was drawn to a curious plant with a fruit resembling small oranges lying upon the ground and called by the natives *karenghi rirri*. There were hundreds of these fruit about, but Mahammed, who had great local botanical knowledge, advised me not to eat them because their poison was deadly, and we did not care to experiment in order to test the accuracy of his statement.

All along this Robat-Nushki route one finds a great many *Mesjids* (or *Masit*, as the word is pronounced by the Beluch). The Mesjid or Masit is a sort of temporary praying spot where good

Mussulmans say their prayers at sunrise or sunset, and answers the purpose—if one may be allowed the expression—of an open-air mosque! The Mesjid may be simple or elaborate, small or big, according to devoutness, patience and materials at hand, but its most frequent shape is circular, or at least more or less regularly curved, and its material, stones, or if stones are not obtainable, sand or mud banked up. Looking to the west towards Mecca is a stone higher than the others, and in the more elaborate Mesjids, such as the one shown in the illustration, a proper kneeling-place to fit the knees is made on the western side, with a stone in the centre to mark the exact direction of Mecca. A "revered tomb" is duly placed in the centre of the larger Mesjids, and an entrance way into them bordered with stones is always present. To enter the Mesjid by stepping over the ledge from any other side would be considered irreverent. The interior is always cleared of all stones and made as smooth as practicable.

There are Mesjids just big enough for one man, these being frequently made by caravan men to say their prayers; and there are large ones for the use of several people. The praying spot to the west is, however, generally only big enough for one at a time.



CIRCULAR MESJID, WITH TOMB AND OUTER KNEELING PLACE.



MESJID ON THE SITE WHERE A MAN HAD BEEN KILLED.
(Between Kishingi and Morad Khan Kella.)

Then there are the more ornamental constructions which had a neatly made wall of white marble enclosed in a case of black stones, a high black pillar to the west and two small white marble ones by its side. The entrance in this case was to the east with a stone slab across it which was raised when entering the Mesjid.

One Mesjid, or more, are generally to be found near burial places. Occasionally I have seen large square or rectangular ones, but they are not quite so common as those of a rounded shape. In some cases the Mesjid consists of a mere semicircle facing towards the west.

The Beluch, as every one knows, is a Suni Mussulman and nourishes a hatred for the Shia sect, but although very observant of certain rites pertaining to the religion of Mahomed, the Beluch is not bigoted in religious matters, and this is probably due to the fact that *mullahs*, *saiyads*, *fakirs* or other such religious officials and fanatics are seldom to be encountered among the Beluch in Northern Beluchistan.

Far south in Makran matters are different; the people are more fanatical, and several religious sects, such as the *Rafais*—a sect which proves its faith in the prophet by self-inflicted tortures—the *Khwajah* and the *Zikris* are found, as well as the "*Biadhiah*," who are despised as heretics by both Suni and Shia Mussulmans, and who fully reciprocate the hatred. Unlike other true Mussulmans, these Biadhiahs indulge in intoxicants and are very slack in religious observances.

But the Brahuis—with whom I mostly came in contact in the North—although not very strict, are certainly most reverent and generally not intemperate. They have no actual mosques wherein to go and pray, but worship in the improvised Mesjids which I have described. In fact, the word *Mesjid* merely means "a place of worship."

Superstition is generally rampant in people leading a somewhat wild life of adventure. Some of the legends of the good and evil *gins*, or spirits and *peris*, fairies, are very quaint. The belief in the magic power of spells and charms is also deeply rooted.

Captain Webb-Ware told me two rather amusing instances of superstition. One day he was out stalking in the hills near Dalbandin, when he came across a snake (*ekis carinata*). The Beluch shikars who were with him refused to go on and sat down for half an hour waiting for the evil influences—of which the snake was a palpable symbol—to vanish.

On another occasion one of his men dropped his knife—a knife which, by the way, he had found on the road. The Beluch got off his camel and stalked the knife as it lay on the ground, and when within a few feet of it he let fly a stone at it—or as near it as he could. This was, he explained, to hit and

hurt the "pal" which was in the knife, by which he meant that the knife was "possessed," and a positive proof of it lay in the fact that he had dropped it on no less than three separate occasions.

There was a certain humour in the remark made by a Beluch at Isa Tahir to Captain Webb-Ware when he saw the captain's servant, with an efficient filter, reduce the filthily slimy water of the only local pool into water as clear as crystal. He rushed to the captain in a state of great concern and anxiety.

"Sahib," he said, "do you know what your servant is doing? He is taking *all* the colour, *all* the strength, and *all* the smell out of the water that you are going to drink!"

CHAPTER XXXV

Captain Webb-Ware, C.I.E.—The Nushki route—An excellent track—Bungalows built and in course of construction—The water—Postal service—Important Government concession—The Nushki route and the railways—Hints to traders—Quaint official formalities—Pilgrims and their ways—An amusing incident.

We arrived very early at Dalbandin, the march from Chakal being very short (18 miles, 190 yards) and easy. Here I had the pleasure of meeting Captain F. C. Webb-Ware, C.I.E., Political Assistant at Chagai, and officer in charge of the Nushki-Robat road. Not only has this officer devoted all his time and energy to making the road, but, being a man of means, he has personally gone to considerable expense to "push" the road and make it a success. It would not have been easy to find a more practical and sensible man to do the work, and, considering the difficulties he had to encounter, it is marvellous with what little expenditure he has obtained such excellent results.

It is all very well for the usual newspaper critic—who generally does not know what he is writing about—to complain of this and complain of that, and declare that something should have been done in exactly the contrary way to the way in which it is done. In regard to this road, any one with any common sense must see that all that could have been done has been, or is being, done—and done well.



THE TYPE OF THANA AND NEW BUNGALOW BETWEEN NUSHKI AND ROBAT.

The road itself—for a desert road—is excellent in every way as far as the frontier, and some sort of shelter is to be found at every stage. Of course the road has only just been opened and all the arrangements for the accommodation of travellers are not quite completed, but large comfortable bungalows had already been erected—as we have seen—at Robat, Mirui, and Dalbandin, while smaller buildings of the same type will shortly be completed at Mall, Kuchaki Chah, Yadgar Chah, Sotag, and Chah Sandan. In addition to these, the erection of bungalows has been taken in hand at Chakal, Tretoh, Mushki-Chah, Saindak, Kirtaka, and Mahomed Raza Chah, and it was anticipated that all these rest houses would be finished before the close of 1902.

Owing to the great increase in the traffic upon the route, the accommodation at Mall, Yadgar Chah, and Karodak, has been nearly doubled, and two rooms added to the already extensive *thana* at Dalbandin, while the Tretoh, Mushki-Chah, and Mukak posts have been much enlarged and strengthened.

On the Persian territory the Vice-Consul in Sistan has erected small shelters, which, although necessarily not quite so luxurious as those under the direct control of the British authorities, are yet quite good enough for any one to spend a night in. We have thus a complete belt of rest-houses extending from Quetta to Sher-i-Nasrya in Sistan.

Every effort has been made to improve the water supply upon the road, and new wells are constantly being sunk. True, the water, all along the route, is not of the best, but one does not generally expect to find delicious sweet spring water in a desert. One thing is, nevertheless, certain, that the best has been made of given circumstances. Barring the most trying section of the route (in Beluchistan territory) between Mukak and Mushki-Chah, where the water is really foul, the majority of wells may be more or less brackish, but, as I have said before, not necessarily unwholesome. In fact, I have a firm belief that brackish water is the water one should drink in the desert to keep healthy, and is the remedy provided by nature for the purpose of balancing other ill-effects produced by travelling over hot, sandy, dry, barren land. Brackish water, however, should not be confounded nor classified with dirty water.

There are post offices at the principal stations, such as Robat, Saindak, Mirui, Dalbandin and Nushki, and a bi-weekly service links Robat with Quetta, the time taken to convey letters being now reduced to 100 hours. A Consular postal service in connection with this continues from Robat, via Sher-i-Nasrya, Birjand to Meshed. There is a parcel-post service, on the very convenient "Value payable parcel system," as far as Robat and Sistan; but from England the Post Office will not take the responsibility of insured parcels beyond Robat.

The Government has granted a most important concession—of great value to traders—by which money can be remitted to or received from either Sher-i-Nasrya (Sistan) or Birjand, through the Consular Treasury, under the charge of the Vice-Consul for Sistan.

Messrs. McIver, Mackenzie, & Co., of Karachi, and Mr. Duncan MacBean, of the Punjab Bank, Quetta, are prepared to act as forwarding agents for Indian and Persian firms, and the Quetta Branch of the Punjab Bank is further in business communication with the Imperial Bank of Persia, which, as we have seen, has agencies in the principal cities of West Persia and also in Meshed.

Another concession, most important to the stimulation of trade by this overland route, has been granted by the North Western Railway in regard to goods despatched from Karachi to Quetta for export to Persia by the Nushki-Robat route. From the 1st of April, 1901, a rebate, equal to one-third of the freight paid, was given on all goods, such as tea, spices, piece-goods, iron, kerosene oil, sugar, brass and copper, etc., booked and carried from Karachi to Quetta for export to Persia by the Sistan route. The usual charges are to be paid on forwarding the goods, but on producing a certificate from the Agency Office at Quetta that the goods have actually been despatched to Persia, *via* Sistan, the amount of the rebate is refunded.

From the 1st of May, 1901, another concession came into effect, allowing a similar rebate of one-third of the actual freight paid on all goods received at Quetta from Persia by the Sistan route (a certificate from the Agency Office at Quetta being required to prove the fact), and despatched thence to Karachi or Kiamari, or to North-western Railway stations in the Punjab and North-west Province, or to stations on connected lines.

Merchants despatching goods to Persia by the Nushki-route should be careful to have each of the original invoices of their goods attested by some qualified officer at the place from which the goods are despatched. By doing this they will find that their goods will be passed through the Persian Customs at the frontier with no trouble and no delay. The invoices should be clearly written in the English or French languages.

The number of travellers along the Nushki-Sistan route is gradually increasing, several officers returning to England travelling by it; but I was assured that I was the first European who had travelled on that route in the opposite direction, viz., from England to Quetta.

Only British subjects and Persians, it is stated, are allowed to travel on this route, and some quaint instances of inconceivable official formality on the part of the Government of India are cited. For instance, a German was allowed to travel by the route from Quetta to Sistan, but another German who wished at the same time to travel from Sistan to Quetta was arrested at the frontier, detained some two months in Sistan, and permission refused.

I myself had quite an amusing experience at a certain station with a travelling police officer, who was not aware of my coming, and seemed in a great state of mind, fearing that I should prove to be a Russian spy!



THE NUSHKI-ROBAT TRACK.

The only thing to be regretted along this route, and one which I think will be a perpetual cause of friction and annoyance with the Persians and Russians—as I am sure it would be to us were we in their case—is that we should allow pilgrims to use this trade route in order to visit the sacred shrine of Imam Raza in Meshed. The number is so fast increasing that it is proposed, I believe, to provide special accommodation for pilgrims at every stage between Quetta and Robat.

Now, there are pilgrims and pilgrims. Some are no doubt well-to-do people and deserve to be looked after; but the greater number are decrepit, sickly fanatics, burdened with all sorts of ailments, whose wish it is to go and die and be buried in the vicinity of the sacred shrine. Furthermore, not only do the living ones go and breathe their last in Meshed (or more frequently upon the road), but among their personal luggage they try to bring over corpses of relations for interment in the holy burial place. The passage of corpses to Persia through Beluchistan is not permitted by the local government, but occasional attempts are made to smuggle them through, and it is not a very easy matter to detect them, not even by the smell of the corpses, which can be no worse than that of the living pilgrims. Even at best these parties of pilgrims are a miserable, half-decomposed lot, with bundles of filthy rags. When anybody dies on the road, attempts—generally successful—are invariably made to bring the bodies along.

That we have had, and still have, the plague in India is a matter we cannot very well hide; that the passage across the Beluchistan and Persian deserts should be a sufficient disinfectant as far as individuals go is also theoretically probable; but I am not certain that the theory would apply to the filthy rags and bedding. I would not speak so feelingly had I not seen these pilgrims myself.

Now, if we choose to allow these creatures to bring infection into other countries—and it must be remembered that if they do go to the shrine it is generally because they are infected with some complaint or other, or actually for the purpose of dying there—we ought not to grumble if the Russians, who see their thickly populated territories of Transcaspia threatened, enforce upon the Persian officials the necessity of hampering the progress of such parties towards Meshed. Nor can we blame them if, when the Persian authorities are unable to enforce stringent measures, they take

matters into their own hands, whether in a strictly legal way or otherwise, in order to prevent these sickly hordes from coming towards their frontier.

I am sure that if the sacred shrine were in British territory, and ailing Russian pilgrims came over bringing bundles of badly-packed dead relations with them, the outcry in this country would be general, and we should soon put a stop to it.

As it is, the provocation to hinder them is very great, while the benefit that we reap by letting these wretches through is rather difficult to detect; they are an expense to the Government rather than otherwise, not to speak of the endless bother and annoyance they give our various officials on the road, for indeed, religious people, whether Mussulman or Christian or Buddhist, can make themselves a nuisance for religion's sake. Moreover, our caravans, following directly after these funereal parties, have occasionally fared badly at the hands of the alarmed natives.

In Sistan, Major Benn was telling me an amusing incident: one or two members of one of these fanatical parties died at the Consulate; the local Persian doctor pronounced it—or them—cases of plague, and the natives were scared to death for fear that the infection should spread; and one day when Major and Mrs. Benn were peacefully riding along the city wall, a number of people with rifles collected upon the ramparts and fired a volley with actual bullets over their heads. It was explained afterwards that the intention was not to cause the riders any harm but merely to drive away the "spirits of infection" which hung over the Consul, who had been with the pilgrims.

There seems to be a belief that the intense cold of the winter, the terrific heat of the summer, and the torrential rains of the autumn, make the Nushki route impracticable during the greater part of the year, but nothing could be further from the truth. One can travel on this route comfortably at almost any time of the year, except during the heavy rains, when the desert becomes a swamp and makes it impossible for camels to go on. In summer, of course, one has to travel at night, and in winter it is pleasanter travelling during the day.

CHAPTER XXXVI

The Beluch-Afghan boundary—Substantial advantages obtained—The Afghans driven from Chagai—Who owns Beluchistan?—How Beluchistan is subdivided—Treaties and engagements with the Kahn of Kelat—The *Brahui* and *Nhauri*—When British political connection with Kelat began—Intrigue—The treaty of 1839—The treaty stolen—Kelat stormed by the British—A revolution—Protection of caravans—Treaty of 1841—At the death of Nasir Khan—Boundary matters settled in 1887—A Brahui rebellion—British mediation—A state of chaos—The Marris and Bugtis—Reconciliation of the Sardars with the Khan of Kelat—Treaty of 1876—British agents at the Khan's court—Railways and telegraphs—Subsidies—British troops stationed in the country—Major Sandeman, agent to the Governor-General—The agreement of 1883—Transfer of dues and tolls—The chiefship of Kharan—The chief of Las Bela—Troublesome Marris—British Beluchistan—The occupants of Zob.

A FEW details of how the British Government came to make the Nushki-Robat road may interest the reader.

After the Afghan war was over, it was supposed that our boundary extended as far north as the river Halmund, but we let things slide for many years and took no steps to extend our influence so far, and the result was that the Amir of Afghanistan—who very rightly regarded Chagai as a most important strategical position, in fact, almost the key to the Halmund—took possession of the place. In 1896 a commission was sent out to define the Perso-Beluch frontier properly, and Major MacMahon, a most thorough and conscientious officer, was placed in charge of the mission.

On looking at the map, one might, if unaware of certain important circumstances, be led rashly to believe that the natural geographical boundary between Beluchistan and Afghanistan is along the course of the river Halmund, or else that it should follow the watershed of the chain of mountains extending, from west to east, from the Malek Siah, the Lahr Kuh, the Kacha Kuh, Mirjawa or Saindak Mountains, to the mountain mass extending as far as the Sultan Mountain. One cannot at first grasp why, when two such excellent natural boundaries exist, the boundary has been drawn right across the desert between the Halmund and these ranges—where there is nothing to mark a division except the whitewashed pillar-posts put up by the boundary commission.

This is what would appear, but here is what really happened. While we were taking no trouble to spread our influence in that portion of the country, the Afghans claimed as theirs a considerable portion of what to-day makes part of N. Beluchistan. A point which it is well not to lose sight of is that, after the Sistan Mission of 1872, when General Sir Frederick Goldsmid, assisted by General Sir Richard Pollock, acted as arbitrators between the Persian and Afghan Governments, it was agreed that the Kuh-i-Malek-Siah (mountains), close to where the Ziarat has been erected, should mark the most south-westerly point common to the two countries. This point being given, when the Beluch-Afghan Boundary Commission began its work in March, 1894, they found that the Afghans claimed a great deal more land as theirs than was expected.

The line of boundary to be defined from Gomal to the Persian frontier was some 800 miles, and during the two years which it took to complete the laying down of the boundary line the Mission is said to have had very great trouble with the Afghan Commissioners.

And here one can hardly forbear comparing the magnificently thorough manner in which this frontier was fixed, with the shoddy, confused method in which the Perso-Beluch frontier was "demarcated"—if the word can be used in this case—by Sir Thomas Holdich at the same epoch.

In the case of the Afghan-Beluch frontier, 800 miles of frontier line was carefully laid down under the direction of Captain (now Major) A. H. MacMahon, to whom Great Britain may be grateful for possessing to-day several hundred square miles of land more than she would have done; and, mark you, these additional square miles are—in a way—strategically the most important portion to us of Beluchistan. I am referring to that zone of flat territory, north of the Mirjawa, Saindak and Sultan

Mountains, which forms a southern barrier to the Afghan desert, and along a portion of which we have now built the Nushki-Robat route.

Strategically, more particularly if a railway is to be constructed, the advantages in gaining that strip of land on the north side of the mountainous region cannot be over-estimated, and only a fearless, but extremely tactful, well-informed and, above all, able officer like MacMahon could have scored such an unexpected success against the very shrewd Afghan Commissioners. The latter well knew the political value of the concession, and so did the Amir at Cabul—who, angered at hearing of the advantages gained by the British Commissioners for their own country, is said to have treated his representatives in a summary way on their return to the Afghan capital.

But the line of boundary was laid in an unmistakable manner. The final agreements and really accurately drawn maps were signed on May 14th, 1896, by both the Afghan and British Commissioners, and there was no going back on what had been done.

One of the important results of this Boundary Commission was that we definitely drove the Afghans out of Chagai, north of which place the frontier now extends eastwards to the Sarlat Mountains. The first thing that directed attention to these remote regions was Nushki, a little district some 90 miles from Quetta—a place most conveniently situated for strategical and trade purposes. This was an outlying portion of the Khan of Kelat's territory.

As a matter of fact these people were always fighting among themselves; they had a bitter enmity with one another, and their feuds had accumulated on an ever increasing scale for centuries. They merely acknowledged the Khan's authority when it suited their ends.

The Government first requested the Khan or Kelat to keep the district in order, being a frontier district, not far from the Afghan boundary, and notified him that trouble there might involve trouble with the British Government. The Khan, however, was helpless, and the ultimate result was that the Government came to terms with the Khan and agreed to give him a quit rent of 9,000 rupees a year—a sum much larger than he ever got out of it for himself—and took over Nushki from him.

One question frequently asked is: "Who owns Beluchistan?" To which one might almost answer: "Yes, who does?"

Like Afghanistan, Nepal, and other such buffer states, Beluchistan is going through a somewhat slow but sure process of absorption. Beluchistan is a mere expression of political geography, and the country called by that name has on the west a semi-mythical boundary with Persia; on the north a real boundary with Afghanistan; to the south the Arabian Sea, and to the west, the Brahui and Lukhi Mountains, bordering with Sindh and the lower Dejarath.

Beluchistan may be subdivided as follows:—

British Beluchistan, with the assigned districts of Quetta and the Bolan; territories under the immediate rule of the Khan of Kelat.

Sarawan and Thalawan, the lands belonging to the two leading Brahui clans.

The Chiefship of Las Bela.

Makran, Kharan, and the country of the Beluch tribes, such as the Marris and Bugtis, along the Punjab and Sind borders.

Bori and Zhob.

We have certain treaties, engagements and Sanads with the Khan of Kelat and the other chiefs, and the country—again I have to use a paradoxical expression—may be regarded as a sort of "dependent independent" state. I can find no better way of describing it. We have bought up all the rights held by the chiefs that were worth buying for our purposes, and while, theoretically, the country is supposed to be merely under our "sphere of influence," we might with our fast-absorbing qualities practically consider it absolutely our own.

The Brahui Khan of Kelat is the most powerful ruler in Beluchistan, and the city of Kelat may be looked upon as the Beluch capital of Beluchistan. Quetta, of course, is the capital of British Beluchistan.

The Beluch may be roughly divided into two great classes, the *Brahui* and the *Nharui*, the latter to be subdivided again into the *Rinds* and the *Numris*. These classes, however, are again to be split up into a great many tribes of different names.



A BELUCH FAMILY.

The meaning of the word *Brahui* is said to be "inhabitants of the desert," and of *Nharui* "men of the plains." The *Nharui* profess to be of Arab origin, and to have come from the west; and they despise the idea that they are akin to the Afghans or the Turkomans. Their features and habits would support this view, and their language undoubtedly bears traces of strong western influence if not of actual western origin. Their being such much finer specimens of men than the average Persians, may be

accounted for by the fact that during the Arab invasion only the fittest and finest survived to get as far as this, and that of these men the Beluch are the present descendants.

Like all nomads the Beluch are most wonderful linguists. I met a great many men who knew three, four or five languages, such as Brahui, Nharui, Persian, Afghan, and even Hindustani, and on experiment they showed remarkable facility for picking up and correctly retaining words of any foreign language.

The theory that the Brahui—the most numerous class in Beluchistan—are Tartar mountaineers is, to my mind, incorrect. They believe themselves to be the aboriginal people of Beluchistan, and this, I think, is more likely the case. Their language is quite different from any of the Nharui dialects. The Nharui tribes are much given to raids and warfare, and even last year, when I was going through Beluchistan, a small war had just been settled by a British force, sent to suppress the rebels, in conjunction with a Persian force from Kerman on the other side.

I cannot speak of the southern tribes as I did not visit them, but the Brahui with whom I came in contact, although very fond of a life of adventure, I invariably found extremely gentlemanly, hospitable and dignified in every way. They were men of a splendid type who, combined determined bravery with the quietest, softest, most considerate and graceful manner.

The Khan of Kelat is the most powerful ruler, and with him we have several important treaties. From the time of Abdullah Khan, in the eighteenth century, Kelat had been a state independent of the Delhi Empire, and had incorporated several provinces. To understand fully the evolution of Beluchistan into its present condition I will give a hasty historical review of the most important occurrences.

The political connection of the British Government with Kelat commenced during the time of the grandson of Nasir Khan, Mehrab Khan, a weak ruler who became Khan in 1819. He was disliked by the chiefs of the various tribes for being under the influence of a man of low extraction called Daud Mahomed, for whom Fateh Mahomed, the hereditary Minister, was sacrificed. Fateh's son, Naib Mulla Mahomed Hasan, however, murdered the intruder and was himself placed in the position his father should have occupied, but his hatred for the Khan never ceased to crave for revenge. In 1838 this treacherous Minister, in the Khan's name, but without his knowledge, incited the tribes to rise and harm the British troops in their march to restore Shah Shujia to his dominions.

Sir Alexander Burns had to be deputed to Kalat to prevent hostility and attempt to negotiate a treaty. The treaty contained the following stipulations.[\[Z\]](#)

"(Art. 1.) The descendants of Nasir Khan, as well as his tribe and sons, shall continue in future to be masters of the country of Kelat, Kachki, Khorstan, Makran, Kej, Bela and the port of Soumiani, as in the time of the lamented Ahmad Shah Durani.

"(Art. 2.) The English Government will never interfere between the Khan, his dependants and subjects, and particularly lend no assistance to Shah Nawaz Fateh Khan, and the descendants of the Mahabbatzai branch of the family, but always exert itself to put away evil from his house. In case of H. M. the Shah's displeasure with the Khan of Kelat, the English Government will exert itself to the utmost to remove the same in a manner which may be agreeable to the Shah and according to the rights of the Khan.

"(Art. 3.) As long as the British Army continues in the country of Khorasan, the British Government agrees to pay to Mehrab Khan the sum of 150,000 of Company's rupees from the date of this engagement by half yearly instalments.

"(Art. 4.) In return for this sum the Khan, while he pays homage to the Shah and continues in friendship with the British nation, agrees to use his best endeavours to procure supplies, carriage and guards to protect provisions and stores going and coming from Shikarpur by the route of Rozan Dadar, the Bolan pass, through Shal to Kuchlak from one frontier to another."

With assurances of fidelity to the Saddozai family and friendship to the British Government—and stipulation that all supplies and carriage obtained from the Khan must be paid for "without hesitation"—the treaty was duly concluded on March 28th, 1839.

Everything seemed satisfactory and the Khan promised to visit Quetta to pay his salaams to Shah Shujia. Sir Alexander Burns, who had preceded him, was robbed on the way of the draft of the treaty signed by the Khan. Treacherous Mulla Mahomed Hasan did not fail to impress upon the British that the Khan had given directions to have the treaty stolen, and had, furthermore, prevented Mehrab from proceeding to Quetta. The hostility of the Khan being evident, it was resolved to send a punitive expedition to Kelat to give the Khan a lesson.

On the 13th of November, 1839, the town was stormed and taken by a detachment of General Wiltshire's brigade, Mehrab Khan was killed and his son fled, while the Khan's Minister was made prisoner and his treachery proved.

Shah Nawaz Khan—a youth of fourteen, a direct descendant in the male line from Mahabat Khan—was set up by the British as the future Khan of Kelat. The provinces of Sarawan and Kach Gandava were annexed to the dominions of the Amir of Afghanistan.

Mehrab's son, Nasir Khan, the rightful successor to the rule of Kelat, headed a revolution; Shah Nawaz was deposed, the British representative at Kelat was killed, and Nasir Khan was eventually established in power by the British, the two provinces restored to him, and a new treaty concluded with him on October 6th, 1841.

This treaty acknowledged Nasir Khan and his descendants the vassals of the King of Cabul; allowed if necessary, the Honourable Company's or Shah Shujia's troops to be stationed in any positions they deemed advisable in any part of his territory; and declared that a British resident officer's advice should always be followed. Caravans into Afghanistan from the Indus as well as from Soumiani port were to be protected from attacks, and no undue exactions imposed on them; the British Government undertook to afford Nasir Khan protection in case of attack; while Nasir Khan bound himself to provide for the support of Shah Nawaz whom he had deposed.

This treaty became useless after the retirement from Cabul, and it was found necessary to negotiate a new agreement dated 4th of May, 1854, which annulled the treaty of October 6th, 1841, enjoined perpetual friendship between the British Government and the Khan of Kelat, his heirs and

successors, and bound Nasir Khan and successive Khans "to oppose to their utmost all enemies of the British Government with whom he must act in subordinate co-operation, and not enter, without consent, into negotiations with foreign States."

British troops might occupy, if necessary, any position they thought advisable in the Kelat territory, and British subjects and merchants from Sindh or the coast to Afghanistan were to be protected against outrage, plunder and exactions. A transit duty, however, was to be imposed at the rate of six rupees on each camel-load from the coast to the northern frontier, and 5 rupees from Shikarpur to the same frontier.

To aid Nasir Khan, his heirs and successors, in the fulfilment of these obligations, and on condition of faithful performance of them, the British Government bound itself to pay to Mir Nasir Khan, his heirs and successors, an annual subsidy of 50,000 Company's rupees. If, however, the conditions required were not fulfilled year by year the Government would stop the payment of the annual subsidy.

When Nasir Khan died in 1857, his brother, his son, and his half-brother claimed the succession, and the latter, Khudadad Khan, a boy of ten, was elected by the chiefs; but had it not been for the support given him by the British Government, who for four successive years paid him an additional 50,000 rupees besides the 50,000 stipulated in the agreement, in order to help him to suppress the rebellious Marris tribe, he could not have maintained his position.

The leading Kelat chiefs, dissatisfied with their ruler, elected Sherdil Khan, Khudadad's cousin, as Khan of Kelat, but he was murdered the following year, 1864, and the banished ruler reinstated in his former position. Previous to his banishment, in 1862, a proper agreement was signed defining the boundary line between British India and the Khan's territory, but it was not till 1887 that matters regarding it were absolutely settled.

One thing may be said for the Beluch, and that is that, barring a few squabbles, they have in the main been friendly and faithful towards the British.

On February 20th and March 23rd, 1863, a convention was entered into with the Khan containing an additional clause for the extension of a telegraph line through such of his dominions as lie between the western boundary of the province of Mekran under the feudatory rule of the Jam of Beyla and the eastern boundary of the territory of Gwadur, for the protection (only) of which line, and those employed upon it, the Khan was to receive an annual payment of 5,000 rupees, the whole sum to be expended among the chiefs and people through whose country the line passed. It was particularly stipulated that the sites on which British Government buildings were to be erected should remain the property of the Khan.

Constant risings took place during the rule of Khudadad, and the Brahui chiefs combined in an open rebellion in 1871. The Khan, being unable to suppress the rising, demanded aid of the British. A mediation took place in Jacobabad, their confiscated lands were restored to the Sardars, the allowances which they customarily received in the time of Mir Nasir Khan the younger were again granted, and the Sardars on their side had to return all the property plundered.

A state of chaos followed this arrangement, the Khan ceased to take an interest in the administration of his country, caravans were constantly attacked and robbed, raids were frequent, and no compensation was ever paid for losses sustained. The Political Agent had to withdraw from Kelat, and in 1854 the payment of the subsidy was withheld until the Khan should stand by his agreement and restore order.

An attempt was made to keep quiet the Marris and Bugtis frontier tribes by additional payments to the chiefs in the name of the Khan, but their attitude was uncertain. Constant attacks occurred on the frontier and a state or absolute anarchy reigned in the Khan's country, when Captain Sandeman was despatched in 1875 as a special Agent for the Government to attempt to bring about a reconciliation between the Khan and the Sardars. At a Darbar held at Mastung in July, 1876, an official reconciliation actually took place between the Khan and the leading Brahui chiefs. On the 8th of December of that same year the Khan was received by the Viceroy of India at Jacobabad, and a new treaty was concluded, which was the actual foundation of the Beluchistan Agency.

The new treaty renewed and reaffirmed the treaty of 1854, and while the Khan of Kelat and his successors and Sardars bound themselves faithfully to observe the provisions of Article 3 of that treaty, viz., "to oppose all enemies of the British Government, and in all cases to act in subordinate co-operation with the British Government; the British Government on its part engaged to respect the independence of Kelat and to aid the Khan, in case of need, in the maintenance of a just authority and the protection of his territories from external attacks."

British Agents with suitable escorts were in future to reside permanently at the Court of the Khan and elsewhere in the Khan's dominions, and a representative of the Khan would in future be accredited to the Government of India.

The British Agent at the Court of the Khan would, in case of dispute with the Sardars, use his influence to bring about an amicable settlement, and if unsuccessful, the dispute was to be submitted to arbitration. At the request of the Khan and of the Sardars, and "in recognition of the intimate relations existing between the two countries, the British Government (by Article 6 of Treaty) assented to the request of H.H. the Khan for the presence of a detachment of British troops in his country, on condition that the troops should be stationed in such positions as the British Government might deem expedient and be withdrawn at the pleasure of the Government."

The agreement further provided for the construction of railways and telegraphs through the territories of the Khan, and for free trade between the State of Kelat and British territory, subject to certain conditions for the mutual protection of fiscal interests.

The annual subsidy of the Khan's successor was increased by this treaty to 100,000 rupees, plus 20,500 rupees annually for the establishment of posts and development of traffic along the trade routes in a manner agreeable to the British Government.

In compliance with the agreement, British troops were stationed at Shalkot (Quetta) and Mittri, and on February 21st, 1877, Major Sandeman was appointed Agent to the Governor-General, with three assistants, the headquarters to be in Quetta. Afterwards the territories, under the political control of

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the Agent, were subdivided into distinct Agencies of which Kelat was one. During the Afghan war
the Khan behaved most loyally towards the British.

Further developments necessitated a fresh agreement signed on June 8th, 1883, by which the Khan of Kelat made over the entire management of the Quetta district and Niabat absolutely, and with all the rights and privileges, as well as full revenue, civil and criminal jurisdiction, and all other powers of administration, to the British Government, the agreement to take effect from April 1st, 1883, on condition that, in lieu of the annual surplus of revenue hitherto paid to the Khan, the British Government should from March 31st, 1884, pay a fixed annual rent of Rs.25,000, without deductions for cost of administration.

The Khan transferred all his rights to levy dues or tolls on the trade in either direction through the Bolan Pass, as well as from Kachi to Khorassan, and to and from British India and the districts of Sibi, Quetta and Pishin.

For the latter concession the British Government paid the Khan the annual sum of Rs.30,000 net, plus a fixed yearly sum to be paid by the Viceroy of India to the Sarawan and Kurd Sardars for their services in the Pass. The full civil, criminal jurisdiction, and all other powers of administration within the limits of the said Pass, and within the land purchased by the British, were also ceded to the British Government.

The population of the State of Kelat, including Kharan and Makran, was estimated by Aitchison at about 220,500 souls—the area at 106,000 square miles.

The Chiefship of Kharan lies along the northern border of the State of Kelat, roughly from near Nushki, west-south-west to Panjur. The principal tribes are the Naushirwanis, and their Chiefs have at various epochs acknowledged the suzerainty of the Khan of Kelat, and the rulers of Persia and Afghanistan respectively. In 1884 Sardar Azad Khan acknowledged allegiance to the Khan of Kelat, and in 1885 a settlement was made with him by which he undertook to do certain tribal services in consideration of an annual payment of Rs.6,000. Besides Kharan the Sardar holds lands in Panjgur, and lays claim to Jalk, Dizak, and Kohak, the two first being within the Persian boundary.

We have other important agreements, such as the one (1861) with the Chief of Las Bela for the protection of the telegraph, for which he receives a subsidy of Rs.8,400 a year; and a number of agreements with the various chiefs of Makran, mostly relating also to the protection of the telegraph line with subsidies or allowances to each chief.

To the troublesome Marris, a tribe occupying the country from the Nari river and the outskirts of the Bolan as far as the plain of Sham near the Punjab boundary to the east, allowances are paid directly for tribal services and for good behaviour. These people have given considerable trouble on several occasions, but are now friendly.

A petroleum concession was ceded by Sardar Mehrulla Khan to the British Government for an annual cash payment.

The affairs of British Beluchistan (Pishin, Sibi and dependencies) are too well known for me to refer to them again beyond what I have already mentioned in these pages. Till 1878 British Beluchistan formed part of the territories of Afghanistan, and was occupied by British troops during the Afghan war. By the treaty of Gandamak its administration was put into the hands of British officers, but the surplus revenue was paid to the Amir at Kabul. The control of the Khyber and Michui Passes was also retained. In 1887, however, the district was incorporated with British India, and is now known as the province of British Beluchistan.



BELUCH HUTS THATCHED WITH PALM LEAVES AND TAMARISK.

An agreement of submission and allegiance was made by the Maliks of Zhob, Bori and the Muza Khal, and Sardar Shahbaz Khan, on November 22nd, 1884, and they further undertook to pay a fine of Rs.22,000, to put a stop to further raiding in British territory, and raise no opposition to British troops being stationed in Zhob and Bori. The occupation of Zhob took place in 1889-90, when the Somal Pass was opened up, and the tribes intervening between the Zhob and the Punjab in the Suliman range were subsequently added to the district.

FOOTNOTES:

[2] See Treaties, Engagements and Sanads. Aitchison, Office Superintendent Government Printing, Calcutta.

CHAPTER XXXVII

The evolution of Nushki—The Zagar Mengal tribe—Tribal feuds—Competition in trade—Venturesome caravans—Pasand Khan—Dalbandin and its geographical

situation—Game big and small—Dates—A famous Ziarat—A Beluch burial ground
—Preparing corpses for interment—How graves are cut into the ground—Beluch
marriages—Beluch thoughtfulness towards newly married couples—A mark of
respect.

HAVING given a general sketch of the agreements with the principal chiefs we will now return to matters relating to the most important point, the pivot, as it were, of our route—Nushki.

When Nushki was taken over by the British Government, the leading tribe in the district was the Zagar Mengal, a Brahui tribe. They had settled in Nushki approximately a century or 150 years ago, and were a most powerful tribe, supposed to number about 9,000, a large proportion of whom lived in Registan (country of sand), to the north and mostly north-east of Nushki across the Afghan frontier. The Zagar Mengal Sardar was in Nushki itself, and he had a right of levying what is termed in Beluch, *Sunge* (a transit due) on all merchandise passing through Nushki. Foreseeing how such a right would interfere with trade, the British Government came to terms with the Sardar, by which, instead of his transit dues, he undertook what is called in Beluchistan a *noukri* or service (old custom by which a man supplies a number of *sawars* and is responsible for them).

The next thing was to settle all the tribal feuds. Three or four tribes were at war. Cases were carefully inquired into and settled according to Beluch law, through the medium of a tribal *jirga*, a council of elders. One case led to another and eventually all were settled up to everybody's satisfaction.

In the meantime traders from Shikarpur, from Quetta, and Kelat, began to be attracted to Nushki; a bazaar was started and is fast growing from year to year. One hundred thousand rupees have already been spent on it, with the result that a number of competing traders came in. Competition resulted in good prices, which further attracted trade, first from the districts to the north in the immediate vicinity of Nushki, and later from further and further afield.

The name of Nushki—practically unknown a few years ago—is at present well known everywhere, and the place has, indeed, become quite an important trade centre. From Nushki, as we have seen, a chain of posts, manned by local Beluch levies, was pushed west as far as Robat on the Persian frontier. Even as late as 1897 trade in these parts was limited to a few articles of local consumption, and Persian trade was represented by a stray caravan from Sistan that had forced its way to Nushki and frequently lost men, camels and goods on the way. The venturesome caravans seldom numbered more than one or two a year, and were at the mercy of a Mamasani Beluch called Pasand Khan, who lived in Sistan and levied blackmail on such caravans as came through. This man was well acquainted with all the marauders who haunted the stretch of country south of the Halmund between Sistan and Chagai. Pasand Khan levied at the rate of twenty krans (about 8s. 4d.) per camel, and saw the caravans in comparative safety as far as Chagai, from which point they were left to their own devices and had to force their way through to Quetta as best they could.

Next to Nushki along the route, Dalbandin—owing to its geographical situation, its ample supply of good water and good grazing—is probably the most important spot, and may one day become quite a big place. There is direct communication from this spot to Chagai (and Afghanistan), Robat, Ladis, Bampur, Kharan, the Arabian Sea, Charbar, Gwadur, Ormarah, Soumiani and Quetta. Even as things are now, Dalbandin is a somewhat more important place than any we had met on coming from Robat, with a very large *thana* and a couple of well-provided shops. Captain Webb-Ware's large camp made it appear to us men of the desert quite a populous district. There was excellent water here and good grazing for camels, while on the hills close by ibex shooting was said to be good. Gazelles (*Chinkara* and Persian gazelle), both called *ask* in Beluch, are to be found in the neighbourhood of this place, and wild asses (*ghorkhar*) nearer Sahib Chah. *Katunga* (sand grouse), *sisi*, *chickor*, a few small bustards (*habara*), and occasionally ducks are to be seen near the water, but taking things all round there is little on the road to repay the sportsman who is merely in search of game.



CIRCULAR ZIARAT WITH STONE, MARBLE AND HORN OFFERINGS.



ZIARAT WITH TOMB SHOWING STONE VESSELS.

The spacious rest-house at Dalbandin was quite palatial, with actual panes of glass in all the windows, mats on the floor, folding chairs to sit upon, tables and Indian bedsteads. Thanks to the kind hospitality of Captain Webb-Ware, I had a most pleasant and instructive day's rest here, and nearly made myself sick by greedily eating irresistible Beluch dates, the most delicious it has ever been my luck to taste. These dates are very carefully prepared in earthen jars with honey, and they say that only one date—the best—is picked from each tree. No description could ever come up to their delicate flavour.

There is a famous Ziarat a couple of miles from Dalbandin which well repays a visit. The larger Ziarat itself is circular, 25 feet in diameter, with a mud and stone wall 4 feet high round it. It has a door to the east and a tomb to the west. A bundle of sticks is laid outside the wall, and another much larger, with red and white rags upon it, at the head of the tomb, the latter being covered as usual with pieces of white marble and round stones. At the head of the grave near the upright sticks was a large stone with holes in the centre, and also a number of wooden drinking cups, masses of horns, sticks, whips, ends of broken bottles, bits of rope, etc. These fragments of civilization hardly added to its picturesqueness. The tomb lay from north to south—a very curious fact, for, as a rule, the head of the tomb in other Ziarats was to the west. The tomb, however, lay in the western portion of the Ziarat circle. The enclosing wall was adorned with horns of sacrificed goats, and, in fact, outside to the south was the sacrificial spot with some large slabs of stone smeared with blood, and the usual upright sticks, but no rags appended to them. It had, nevertheless, some decoration of horns.

A second Ziarat was to be found on the top of the hill—generally these Ziarats go in couples, the principal one on the summit of a hill, the other at the foot, the latter for the convenience of travellers who have not the time or the energy to climb to the higher sacred spot,—and this Ziarat was 45 feet long also with a tomb—this time of black rounded stones—with an upright white slab of marble. The wall of black stones was 1½ feet high. Below this, to the south, was a third smaller oval Ziarat, 20 feet long, 12 feet wide, with many offerings of horns perched on poles to the west, and a heap of fancy stones, together with some implements such as a mortar, pestle, and cups. A fourth Ziarat, very small, with a mud tomb on which two mill stones had been deposited, was a little further on and had a solitary rag flying.

Near these Ziarats was an extensive Beluch burial-ground, to which bodies were brought from very great distances for interment. There was a large rectangular Mesjid, the first I had seen of that shape, at the western point of the graveyard, and three smaller ones at the other corners, and the graves were very nice and tidy, formed generally of fragments of yellow marble, a high stone pillar at the head and one at the foot, and little chips of marble along the upper centre of the grave. Others more elaborate had a neat edge and centre line of black stones and coloured end pillars, while some consisted of a pile of horizontal sticks with an upright one at each end.

The bodies of more important people, such as chiefs, were given larger tombs, often very gaudy and of a prismatic shape, made of myriads of bits of crystal within a black border of stones. Occasionally a trench was dug round the graves.

It was interesting to note that here, too, as on the Kuh-i-Kwajah, one saw "family graves" which, although not in actual compartments like those on the Sistan mountain, were, nevertheless, secluded from the others within a low boundary stone wall. The prismatic graves seldom rose more than 1½ feet above ground, but the semi-spherical tumuli which marked some of the more important burial places were from 3½ to 4 feet high. These tumuli were either of mud or of large smooth pebbles, and generally had no pillars. One or two, however, had a pillar to the west.

To the east of the graveyard the graves which seemed of a more recent date had sticks at each end instead of stone pillars, and these were connected by a string to which, halfway between the sticks, hung a piece of wood, a ribbon, or a rag. The meaning of this I could not well ascertain, and the versions I heard were many and conflicting. Some said these were graves of people who had been recently buried, it being customary to erect the stone pillars some months after burial, and that the string with dangling rag or piece of wood was merely to keep wolves from digging up dead bodies. Others said it was to keep evil spirits away, but each man gave a different explanation, and I really could not say which was the true origin of the custom. The pillars over a man's grave, some say, signify that the man died without leaving issue, but I think this is incorrect, for it would then appear by most graves that the Beluch are the most unprolific people on earth, which I believe is not the case.

Children's graves were usually covered with pieces of white marble or light coloured stone, and those of women were generally smaller and less elaborate and with lower pillars than men's graves.

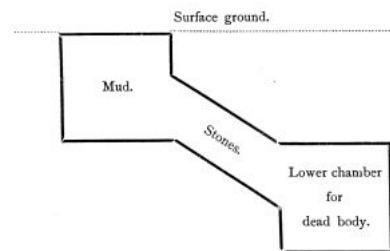
The preparing of corpses for interment is rather interesting. With men, the lower jaw is set so that the mouth is closed tight, and is kept in this position by the man's own turban which is wound round the chin and over the head. The eyes are also gently closed by some relative, and the hands placed straight by the sides. As soon as life is pronounced extinct the body is covered over with a sheet and the dead man's relations go and procure new clothes, after which the body is removed from the tent or house and is taken towards a well or a stream, according to circumstances. Here the body is laid down and carefully washed, after which it is wrapped up quite tight in sheets—so tight that the

outline can plainly be distinguished. In most cases, a pillar is put up, a few stones laid round, or the outline of a grave drawn on the spot where the body has lain to undergo this operation. The body is then removed to the burial ground and laid most reverently in the grave.



BELUCH MESJID AND GRAVEYARD AT DALBANDIN.

Beluch graves are most peculiarly cut into the ground. Instead of being vertical, like ours, they are in three sections. The higher is vertical, and leads to an inclined side channel giving access to a lower last chamber, in which the body is actually deposited. The origin of this, I was told, is to prevent hyenas and wolves digging up the bodies.



SECTION OF BELUCH GRAVE.

When once the body is laid in its place of rest, dried sweet-scented rose leaves are spread over it in profusion, and then the grave is filled up with stones and plastered with mud. The channel between the two chambers is filled entirely with stones, and the upper chamber entirely with earth.

Some few of the graves I saw had fallen through, but most were in excellent preservation and appeared to be well looked after by the people. That the Beluch are provident people we had palpable proof in this cemetery, where one saw several graves ready for likely future occupants.

Another Mesjid, a circular one seven feet in diameter, was further to be noticed to the north-east of the graveyard. It had yellow marble pillars of sugar-loaf and cylindrical shapes and was enclosed by a neat stone wall.

A Beluch marriage is a practical business transaction by which a girl fetches more or less money, camels or horses, according to her personal charms, beauty, and social position. Beluch women, when young, are not at all bad-looking with well-cut features and languid eyes full of animal magnetism like the Persian, and they seem shy and modest enough. The Beluch men have great respect for them, and treat them with consideration, although—like all Orientals—they let women do all the hard work, which keeps the women happy.

A marriage ceremony in Beluchistan bears, of course, much resemblance to the usual Mussulman form, such as we have seen in Persia, with variations and adaptations to suit the customs and circumstances of the people.

A good wife costs a lot of money in Beluchistan, although occasionally, in such cases as when a man has been murdered, a wife can be obtained on the cheap. The murderer, instead of paying a lump sum in cash, settles his account by handing over his daughter as a wife to the murdered man's son. Bad debts and no assets can also be settled in a similar manner if the debtor has sufficient daughters to make the balance right.

Under normal circumstances, however, the girl is actually bought up, the sum becoming her property in case of divorce. When the marriage ceremony takes place and the relations and friends have collected, the first step is for the bridegroom to hand over the purchase sum, either in cash, camels, or sheep. A great meal is then prepared, when the men sit in a semicircle with the bridegroom in the centre. Enormous quantities of food are consumed, such as rice saturated with *ghi* (butter), piles of *chapatis* (bread) and sheep meat. A man who pays four or five hundred rupees for a wife is expected to kill at least twenty or thirty sheep for his guests at this entertainment, and there is a prevailing custom that the bridegroom on this occasion makes a gift to the *lori* or blacksmith of the clothes he has been wearing since his betrothal to the girl.

The women on their side have a similar sort of entertainment by themselves, stuff themselves with food to their hearts' content, and wash it down with water or tea. At the end of the meal a bowl is passed round and each man and woman rinses mouth and hands.

The *Sung*, or betrothal, is regarded as most sacred, and much rejoicing is gone through for several days with music and dancing and firing of guns, and this is called the *nikkar*, just preceding the *urus*, or actual marriage ceremony, which is performed by a Mullah. The bridegroom, having ridden with his friends to a neighbouring Ziarat to implore Allah's protection, returns and sits down in the centre of the circle formed by the men. Two of his friends are sent to fetch the girl's father, who is led down to the assembly.

The bridegroom again assures him in front of all these witnesses that should he from any fault of his own divorce his wife he will forfeit the premium paid for her, whereupon the father replies that he

will settle a sum on the girl as a "*mehr*" or dowry. The father then departs, and returns, bringing the bride wrapped up in her best clothing and *chudder*.

A slightly modified Mussulman form of marriage is then gone through, and the Mullah asks the woman three times if she agrees to marry the man. Everything having passed off satisfactorily, the happy couple depart to a hut or tent placed at their disposal, and very discreetly, nobody goes near them for some considerable length of time.

It is said that the thoughtfulness of the Beluch towards a newly-married couple will go so far that, even if the tribe were stalked by the enemy, no one would go and warn the happy couple for fear of disturbing them!

The bridegroom stays with his bride for several days, and if he belongs to some other village or encampment, will then return to his home, and leave his wife behind for months at a time.

Beluch wives are said to be quite faithful, and at the death of the husband go for a considerable time without washing. This mark of respect for the husband is, however, extensively indulged in even before the wife becomes a widow—at least, judging by appearances.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

A long march—Karodak—Sandstorm—A salt plain—Yadgar—Padag—Beluch huts
—Fierce wind—Plants—Kuchaki chah—Another double march—Mall—Two tracks
—Peculiar cracks—A gigantic geological fault—An old Beluch fort—Nushki.

CAPTAIN WEBB-WARE having most kindly arranged to "dak" camels for me, I was enabled to remain here one day by sending my own camels with loads ahead, I proposing to catch them up by going three marches on January 27th. The distance was 54 miles 980 yards, and I covered it in nine hours, which was quite good going.

"Sand mounts and high hill ranges were to the north and south, and the track lay east-north-east (70° b.m.) with parallel sand ridges to the north. Three long sand banks from 30 to 50 feet high, facing north, accumulated by wind coming through gaps in the hills. To south, high mountains as one approaches Karodak."

That is the only entry I find in my note-book for the march between Dalbandin and Karodak (16 miles 380 yards). Here the camel that had been sent ahead for me to ride to the next post-house had unluckily bolted, and after wasting nearly an hour the Beluch were unable to capture him. I bade good-bye to the *jemadar* and his men, who had politely escorted me thus far, and had to continue upon the same camel.

At Karodak (3,220 feet) there was a small *thana* surrounded by sand hills, with high tamarisks and good grazing for camels, but the water of the wells was salt.

We trotted along in a terrific wind storm, with yellowish dust obscuring everything like a fog, and went over numerous big stretches of mud and salt, cracked by the sun in semicircles like the scales of a fish. Low hills could now be perceived to north, south and east, when the wind slightly abated and the dust settled down.

After crossing a sand ridge extending from north to south, we still going east-north-east (70° b.m.), another large salt plain disclosed itself before us. The old track went from this point towards the south, but the new one was in a perfectly straight line. For the first time since entering Beluchistan one began to see some little vegetation on the hill sides, and a few high tamarisks could be noticed in the plain itself.

At Yadgar (altitude 3,100 feet) we found a four-towered *thana*, with one *duffadar*, four sepoys, five *mari* camels, and three wells of good water, as well as a new bungalow, but I only remained just a few minutes to change my belongings from Captain Webb-Ware's camel to mine, which was waiting here for me, and speedily proceeded for Padag where, in a terrible wind which had risen again after sunset, I arrived at eight o'clock in the evening.

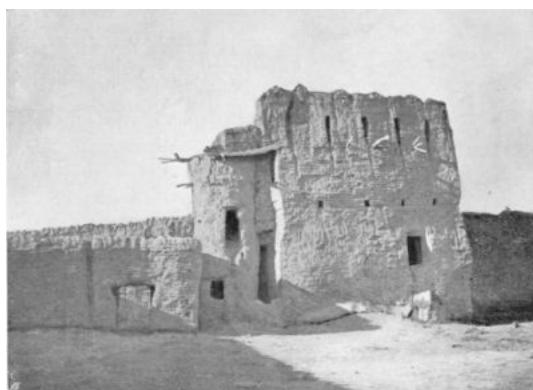
At Padag (3,080 feet) a number of semi-spherical Beluch huts, 4 to 5 feet high, with domes thatched with tamarisk and palm leaves, were to be seen. Most dwellings were in couples, enclosed in a circular wall for protection against the wind as well as from the observation of intruders. Although a cold wind was blowing fiercely at the time, and the thermometer was only four degrees above freezing point, there were some twenty children playing about perfectly naked, and they seemed quite happy and comfortable.

From Padag we went across another plain of salt and mud, with *sorag* grass and *drog*, two plants much cherished by camels. To the north of our track was an extensive surface of salt deposits, extending from west to east, which looked just as if the country were covered by snow. Quantities of *eshwerk*—very pretty to look at when in flower, but most poisonous—were now found, and *brug*, good for horses. There were three parallel ranges of broken-up mountains on our south, and lots of tamarisks on the south edge of the salt deposits. It was rather curious that to the north of our track the vegetation consisted entirely of *drog* grass, whereas to the south there was only *eshwerk*.

A few yards from the track to the south we came upon a graveyard (a Kabistan) with some fifteen or twenty graves. Water we had seen flowing in two or three channels from the mountain to supply villages and forming pools here and there. We passed between two mountains into another plain with dried up *karankosh* bushes, much liked by camels. Good grazing for horses was to be found north, and extended as far as the foot of the mountains.



KUCHAKI CHAH REST HOUSE.



OLD BELUCH MUD FORT NEAR NUSHKI.

Kuchaki Chah, an unroofed rest-house a few feet square—a photograph of which can be seen in the illustration here appended—lies between two high ranges of rocky mountains with high accumulations of sand to the south-west and north-east respectively. The rugged mountains to the south were called Bajin. Another shrub, *trat*, also much cherished by camels, was plentiful here. Black precipitous rocks in vertical strata, splitting into long slabs and blocks, were to be seen along the mountain range to the South.

We had made another double march on that day, and reached Mall in the middle of the night. Padag to Kuchaki Chah, 13 miles, 756 yards; Kuchaki Chah to Mall, 15 miles, 1,154 yards. Total, 29 miles, 150 yards.

It was freezing hard, thermometer 28° Fahrenheit, and the wind bitterly cold. My men felt it very much and so did my camels, which all became ill.

We left Mall again very early the following morning, as I intended to proceed direct to Nushki. There were two tracks here to Nushki, the old and the new. The old track went in a straight line and was in consequence some miles shorter; the new track more or less follows the foot of the mountain range, probably taking this course for the convenience of the several Beluch villages to be found in the Nushki plain.

The rocky mountain range to the south got lower as we approached Nushki, and was then crossed by another low range extending from north to south while the longer and higher range stretched from north-north-east to south-south-west. A few miles from Nushki we came across some most peculiar and very deep cracks in the earth's crust. One could plainly see that they were not caused by the erosion of water, but by a commotion such as an earthquake. In fact, we came, soon after, to a place where the whole sandy plateau had actually collapsed, and when we stood on the edge of the portion which still remained unchanged, we could see it end abruptly in perpendicular cliffs. What was the evident continuation of the valley lay now some hundred or more feet below its former level. In this lower valley there were a number of Beluch villages.

This crack and depression extends for no less than 120 miles, according to Major MacMahon, who in 1896 went, I believe, along its entire length into Afghan territory, and he describes it as "a well-defined, broad line of deep indentations, in places as clearly defined as a deep railway cutting. Springs of water are to be found along its course. The crack extends north from Nushki along the foot of the Sarlat range, and then diagonally across the Khwajah Amran range, cutting the crest of the main range near its highest peak and crossing the Lora River. A well-marked indentation was traceable at the edge of the plain near Murghachaman, some 18 miles north of Chaman."

MacMahon states that the Beluch themselves attribute it to three different earthquakes, of which accounts have been handed down by their fathers, and at the time of which deep fissures appeared that have subsequently extended. Major MacMahon adds that this crack marks the line of a gigantic geological fault, with sedimentary rocks to the east of it and igneous rocks to the west, and he believes, rightly, I think, that the length of this fault line exceeds that of any other fault line yet discovered.

On the upper plateau on which we travelled tamarisks altogether disappeared for the last twenty miles or so, and *tagaz* shrubs, varying from one to six feet high, were practically the only plant we saw. In the underlying plain tamarisk was most plentiful. Facing us on the mountain side a white cliff could be seen from a long distance, with a most regular row of double black marks which looked exactly like windows.

On approaching Nushki we saw some patches of cultivation (wheat)—quite a novelty to us, being the first crops of any extent we had seen since leaving Sistan—and near at hand an old Beluch fort,

of which a photograph is given in the illustration. The fort possessed a picturesque composite old tower, partly quadrangular, partly cylindrical.

We reached Nushki at night (31 miles, 1,320 yards from Mall).

CHAPTER XXXIX

A new city—The Bungalow—Numerous Beluch villages—Nomads—Beluch architecture—Weaving looms— Implements—Beluch diet—Cave dwellers of Nushki—Beluch dress—Children—The salaam of the chiefs—An impressive sight—The Kwajah Mohammed Ziarat—Shah Hussein's Ziarat and its legend—A convenient geographical site.

On arriving at this new city, with actual streets and people moving about in them, shops, etc., it seemed to me at first almost as good as if I had arrived back in London again. The Bungalow, on a prominent hill 75 feet above the plain, was simply and nicely furnished, and was most comfortable in every way. From it one obtained a fine panoramic view of the small town and the neighbouring country with the many Beluch villages scattered about.

North, two miles off, was Mengal, a village of about 300 houses and 1,500 people; west lay Jumaldini (2½ miles distant), 200 houses, 6-700 inhabitants; north-west, Badini in two blocks, one belonging to Alun Khan, the other jointly to Khaian Khan and Adal Khan: 200 houses collectively, 400 to 500 people. Little Badal Khan Karez, with only 30 houses, stood to the south-west. The population of these villages is formed of the tribes called *Barechis* and *Rashkhanis*, the people of Badini and Jumaldini being entirely Rashkhanis. The Barechis formerly inhabited Afghanistan, but migrated to the Nushki district three generations ago. Bagag (south-west) is a village generally inhabited by Mandais, a branch of the Jumaldini Rashkhanis.

Two big villages are to be found south, and they are called *Batto*, which means "mixture," owing to the populations being composed of Rashkhanis, Mingals, Samalaris, Kharanis, and other minor tribes; and south of Batto are two more villages (east and west respectively of each other). The one east is Harunis, a separate tribe from either the Rashkhanis and the Mingals, who follow the head chief Rind. The second village (west) is Ahmed Val, inhabited by Ahmed Zai Mingals. Besides these villages, the remainder of the population is of nomads.

It may have been noticed that regarding the village of Bagag I said that "generally" it was inhabited by Mandais. Certain villages are inhabited by certain tribes during the summer, the people migrating for the winter months, and other tribes come in for the winter and vacate their quarters in the summer. The Beluch is not much burdened with furniture and can do this without inconvenience.

The crops grown consist of wheat, barley and *jowari* (millet). Where good grazing is obtainable the younger folks are sent out with sheep, horses and camels.

Almost each tribe has a different style of architecture for its dwellings. Those near Nushki are usually rectangular in shape, domed over with matting covered with plaster. The only opening is the door, with a small porch over it. Wooden pillars are necessary to support the central portion of the dome (semi-cylindrical), which is never higher than from five to eight feet. The mangers for the horses, which form an annex to each dwelling—in fact, these mangers are more prominent than the dwellings themselves—are cylindrical mud structures eight or nine feet high, with a hole cut into them on one side to allow the horse's head to get at the barley contained in the hollowed lower portion.



BELUCH HUTS AND WEAVING LOOM.



The weaving looms are the largest and principal articles of furniture one notices—not inside, but outside the houses. The illustration shows how the cloth and threads are kept in tension, from every side, in a primitive but most effective manner. The women work with extraordinary rapidity and with no pattern before them, beating each transverse thread home by means of an iron comb held in the hand. The pattern on the cloths is of a primitive kind, generally sets of parallel lines crossing one another at right angles.

In the same photograph two Beluch dwellings can be seen, with matting showing through the thatch. In many villages, however, the walls of the houses are made of sun-dried bricks, and only the roof is made of a mat plastered over with mud. In either case the Beluch seems to have a liking for crawling rather than walking into his house, for the doorway is invariably very low—4½ to 5 feet high.

One is generally sorry to peep into a Beluch dwelling, but I felt it a sort of duty to see what there was to be seen. Nothing! or almost nothing. A large wooden bowl, a stone grinding wheel with a wooden handle to grind wheat into flour, a wooden drinking cup or an occasional tin enamelled one, of foreign importation, a matchlock, and that was all. In some of the smarter dwellings, such as the houses of chiefs, a few additional articles were to be found, such as a *badni*—a sort of jar for taking water—flat stones which are made red hot for baking bread, some occasional big brass dishes—*tash*—used on grand occasions—such as wedding dinners; and a *deg* or two or large brass pots.

Nearly every household, however, possesses one or more *khwa* or skins for water, and a large *kasa*, made either of metal or wood, into which broth is poured during meals. Occasionally in a corner of the hut a small table is to be seen, on which are placed all the family's clothing, blankets, *darris* or carpets, and *lihaf* or mattresses. These carpets, or rather rugs, are generally spread when receiving an honoured guest.

The Beluch diet is wholesome but simple. They are fond of plenty of meat when they can get it, which is not often, and they generally have to be satisfied with dry bread. The woman who can make the largest and thinnest bread is much honoured among the Beluch. When they do obtain meat it is generally boiled and made into a soup called *be-dir*, which in the Brahui language really means "salt water," to express "flavoured water." Milk and *ghi* are dainties seldom indulged in and, being Mussulmans, the Beluch imbibe no intoxicants, but are smokers of strong bitter tobacco.

It is not uncommon for lambs, sheep and calves to share the homes and some of the meals of their masters.

Perhaps the most peculiar folks at Nushki are the cave dwellers, who live in abject misery in holes eroded by water in the cliffs near the river. When I visited them most were half-naked and trembling with cold. A few rags answered the purpose of blankets. The only articles of furniture and comfort were a primitive pipe moulded out of mud—the *chilam* or the *gaddu* as it is called by the Kakars—which occupied a prominent place in the dwelling, and a musical instrument placed in a receptacle in the wall of the cave. At the entrance of the cave a wall had been built for protection against the wind and water.

In another dwelling an *assah* or long iron rod, like a crutch, the emblem of fakirs, was noticeable, and by its side an empty "potted-tongue" tin with a wire attached to it—an article which was made to answer to a great many uses. This cave had a small store place for food, a drinking cup, and the wooden vessel—another emblem of fakirs—in which charitable people deposit money for the support of these poor wretches.

The dress of the better class Beluch men consists of a *khuss*, or sort of loose shirt reaching below the knees, and the enormous trousers falling in ample folds, but fitting tight at the ankle. At an angle on the head they wear a conical padded cap, embroidered in gold or silver, inside a great turban of white muslin. They also wear shawls or long scarves thrown over the shoulders in a fashion not unlike our Highlanders. Either shoes with turned-up toes are worn or else sandals. Felt coats or sheep-skins are donned in winter, while the richer people wear handsome coats and waistcoats of cloth embroidered in gold or silver. The chiefs possess most beautiful and expensive clothes.

The women of the poorer classes are garbed in a short petticoat, usually red or blue, and a loose shirt. A long cloth, not unlike a chudder, is thrown over the head, and is kept tight round the forehead by a band. It is fashionable to let it drag on the ground behind. Women generally go about barefooted. Better class ladies wear similar clothes but of better material, and often richly embroidered. Occasionally they put on large trousers like Persian women. The hair is either left to flow loose at the sides of the head, or is tied into a knot behind.

Necklaces, ear-rings, nose-rings, bracelets and armlets are worn; white shells of all sizes from the Persian Gulf, as well as glass beads, playing a very important part in women's ornaments. Bracelets cut out of a large white sea-shell are common.

Beluch children are rather quaint, with little skull caps, much decorated with silver coins, one of which larger than the others hangs directly over the forehead. The poor little mites are further burdened with ear-rings, bracelets and heavy necklaces of glass beads. Mothers seem tenderly fond of their children.

I was much delighted on the morning of January 29th to find that all the chiefs of the neighbouring tribes, garbed in their gaudy robes, had come with their retinues to pay their salaams to me. I heard the buzzing noise of a crowd approaching up the hill, and on looking out of the bungalow window beheld a most picturesque sight. A tall, long-haired figure in a brilliant long gown of red velvet, with gold embroideries in front and back, walked slowly a-head, followed by a cluster of venerable old men, some in long yellow skin *poshtees*, others in smart waistcoats covered with gold and silver embroidery. All wore huge turbans with gold embroidered conical caps inside. Behind them came a mass of armed men with swords and rifles.

On reaching the bungalow, fearing that I should still be asleep, they became silent, and as I watched them unseen from behind the blinds I do not believe that I have ever in my life gazed upon such a fine, dignified, manly lot of fellows anywhere. They seated themselves in a perfect circle, some twenty yards in diameter, directly outside the bungalow, carpets having been spread where the chiefs were to be accommodated. The chiefs sat together, and the soldiers and followers—over 150—with guns, matchlocks and Snider rifles, squatted down in two semicircles at their sides.

An opening was left large enough for me to enter the ring, and when I approached all respectfully rose and salaamed, and the chiefs, coming forward in turn, shook me heartily by the hand with the usual long Beluch salutation, each bowing low as he did so. Sitting in the centre of the circle on a carpet, which had been spread for me, I addressed them in a few words, which they seemed to appreciate, and each chief answered back in a simple, straightforward and most thoughtful, gentlemanly manner.

Mahammed Ali, the leading chief, in a red velvet coat, was the Mingal Sardar of the three powerful tribes, Jumaldini, Badini, and Mingal, and by his side sat Kaim Khan with his shield and sword, the second Sardar of the neighbourhood and brother of the Jumaldini Sardar. Jan Beg, who sat on the left hand side of the chief Sardar, was a thin tall man, and Alam Khan, a splendid old fellow with a fine inlaid sword, can be seen standing in the photograph reproduced in the illustration.

The last of the principal five Badini chiefs was a comparatively young man of black complexion, long jet black curly hair, and garbed in a gaudy poshteen, sword and belt. His name was Kasin Khan.

Then there was Kadar Bakhsh, uncle of the present Mingal Sardar, a man most useful to the British Government, and beside him his brother, Attar Khan.

Gauher Khan, nephew of the Mingal Sardar, was a picturesque young man with heavily embroidered black coat and a black turban. He carried his sword in his hand.

As one looked round the circle it was really a most impressive and picturesque sight—colours of all sorts dazzling in the sunlight. Among the other most important men were Adal Khan (cousin of the Badini chief), a very old fellow, curved from age; and Bai Khan, his cousin, who looked somewhat stronger; Kaiser Khan, a smart young fellow with curly hair, black coat and trousers, was the son of the Jumaldini chief, and a young fellow of weak constitution, by name Abdullah Aziz, was son and heir of the Badini Sardar.



A BADINI SARDAR.



Sardar Mahomed Ali.
THE SALAAM OF THE BELUCH SARDARS AT NUSHKI.
(Sardar Alam Khan standing.)

Sherdil and Mehrullah Khan, with elaborately embroidered coats and Snider rifles, sat among the elect, and the others were soldiers and followers, but a fine lot of fellows indeed, all the same.

When the formal reception broke up I showed them my repeating rifles, revolvers and various instruments, which interested them greatly; and the leading chiefs having been entertained to tea, they eventually departed after repeated salaams.

Although the Beluch and the Afghan shake hands on arrival, they seldom do so on departing, the handshake being for them an outward sign to express the joy of seeing a friend.

On surveying the neighbourhood from our high point of vantage at the bungalow, we found plenty to interest the observer. To the north and north-west directly below the hill could be seen a graveyard in two sections, the tombs being very high above ground, with prismatic tops of white stones, whereas the bases were of black pebbles. The tombs in the graveyard to the north-west were in bad preservation. There was at this spot a well known Ziarat called Kwajah Mahomed, and the British Government has given much pleasure to the natives by sanctioning a "mufi" or remission of revenue for ever of all the land belonging to this Ziarat in order to provide for the support of it.

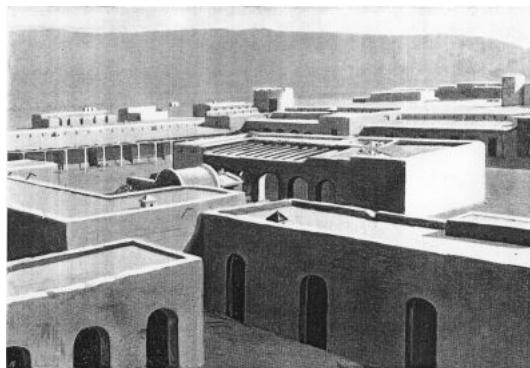
The people of the district are extremely religious, and they have erected Mesjids and Ziarats on every possible hill in the neighbourhood. The most interesting is the Shah-Hussein Ziarat, which has a curious legend of its own. They say, that when the Arabs attacked Shah-Hussein, he killed all his enemies by merely praying to God. With their heads, which suddenly turned into solid stone, he built the Ziarat. The tomb is made, in fact, of round stones, some of enormous size, evidently worn into that shape by water, but the natives firmly believe that they are petrified heads of Arabs!

Nushki is most conveniently situated in a large valley with mountains sheltering it from the north, north-east, east, south-east, south, south-south-west, but from south-south-west to north there is a stretch of open flat desert (the *Registan*, or "country of sand") as far as the eye can see. To the south of the bungalow is a hill range stretching from north-north-east to south-south-west, and suddenly broken by the valley, through which runs the stream which, then proceeding along the Nushki plain from east to west, turns in a graceful curve round the western side of the hill on which the bungalow is situated, and proceeds across the desert in a north-north-west direction, where, having supplied several villages and irrigated their fields, it eventually exhausts itself in the desert. A broad river bed can be noticed on the east side of and parallel with the above hill range. The east side of these hills has been much worn by water action; so much so that actual holes and caves in the soft strata of sand and gravel have been corroded by the water, and these holes, as we have seen, are now inhabited by destitute Beluch.

CHAPTER XL

The fast growing city of Nushki—The Tashil—the Tashildar—Beluch law—Hospital—Pneumonia and consumption—Lawn tennis—The Nushki Bazaar—Satisfactory trade returns—The projected Quetta-Nushki Railway—A great future for Nushki—An extension to Sistan necessary—Also a telegraph—Preferable routes for a railway to Sistan—From Nushki to Kishangi—A curious Mesjid—Mudonek Ateng Mountain—A fast of twenty-five days—The Chiltan and Takatu Mts.—The Gurghena tribe—Huts and tents—Beluch hospitality—Villages.

LET US take a walk through the fast growing city of Nushki. Half a dozen years ago there was next to nothing here, but now we have a beautiful *Tashil*—a large walled enclosure, with a portico all round inside and circular towers at the four corners. The actual Tashil office, occupying the north-east corner, has a most business-like appearance, with handsome iron despatch-boxes, clocks that mark each a different time, but look most imposing all the same, and folio-documents folded in two and carefully arranged in piles upon the floor by the side of wise-looking clerks squatting in their midst. The Tashildar himself, Sardar Mohammed Yuzaf Khan Popalzai, is a much respected man of Afghan birth, of the Bamezi Popalzai Durrani, or descendants of the tribe reigning in Cabul before Mahammed Zeis took the throne, when his ancestors and the Saddo Zeis were forcibly banished from the country.



THE NEW CITY OF NUSHKI. (overlooking the Tashil Buildings.)

The Tashildar, a most intelligent officer, seems to understand the Beluch chiefs thoroughly, treats them with extreme consideration—in private life dealing with them as honoured guests, and politically as Government subjects who must adhere to their loyalty to the King.

There are also within the Tashil wall a post and telegraph office and a treasury, a neat little red brick building, with strong iron gates and huge padlocks. Prisons are on either side of the treasury, so that one single sentry may keep an eye on both the prisoners and the local Government funds.

When I visited the place an old man in chains was squatting in the sun outside his cell. I inquired what crime he had committed. His daughter, they said, was betrothed to a young man, and at the time appointed for the marriage the old man did not bring the girl to the bridegroom as stipulated. He had consequently already been here in prison for two months to pay for his folly, and would possibly have to remain some months longer, for, according to Beluch law—which is in force here—such a crime deserves severe punishment.

Another prisoner—a cattle lifter—had a most hideously criminal head. Prisoners were very well cared for, had nice clean cells given them, and were provided with plenty of food and blankets.

The Tashil establishment consisted of one Tashildar, one *Sarishtedar* (clerk who reads papers), one Judicial *Moharrir*, one *Kanungo* (revenue clerk), three *patwaris*, one accountant in treasury and one treasurer, one *chaprassi*, one petition writer, one levy moonshee, one post and telegraph master, one postman, one hospital assistant, one compounder, three servants.

Next to the Tashil was the *thana* and Police-station, with a police thanedar, one sergeant and nine (Punjab) constables, as well as a levy *jemadar* with one *duffadar* and ten *sawars*.

There is a practical little hospital at Nushki, with eight beds and a dispensary, but the health of the place seemed very good, and there were no patients when I visited it. Moreover, it seems that the Beluch prefer to be given medicine and remain in their dwellings, except in cases of very severe illness. The principal ailments from which they suffer are small-pox, measles, and scurvy, which in various stages is most prevalent among the Beluch. Chest complaints are unknown among them while they live out in the open air, but when they are forcibly confined to rooms, for instance as prisoners, they generally die of pneumonia or develop consumption.

Two caravanserais are found at Nushki, one for traders from Sistan, and one for caravans from Quetta, and a mosque, so that the place is quite a self-contained little town.

In front of the hospital one is rather staggered by finding an actual tennis court laid down according to the most precise rules, and no doubt in course of time we may expect golf links and ping-pong tournaments which will mark further steps towards the Anglicisation of that district. But personally I was more interested in the local bazaar, counting already 150 shops.

The Nushki bazaar is along a wide road kept tidy and clean, and the place boasts of butcher-shops, a washerman, one tailor marked by smallpox and one who is not; *ghi* merchants with large round casks outside their doors; cloth merchants; blacksmiths and grain shops. In a back street—for, indeed, Nushki boasts already of two streets parallel with the main thoroughfare—under a red flag hoisted over the premises is an eating house—a restaurant for natives. The merchants are mostly Hindoos from Sind.



JEMADAR AND LEVIES, NUSHKI.



A GIANT BELUCH RECRUIT. (Chaman.)

The land on which the shops have been built has practically been given free by the Government on condition that, if required back again at a future date, the builder of the house upon the land reclaimed is entitled, as an indemnity, only to the restitution of the wood employed in the construction of the house—the chief item of expense in Nushki constructions.

Cotton goods, blue, red and white, seem to command the greatest sale of any articles in Nushki, after which the local trade consists of wheat, almonds, barley, carpets (from Sistan), wool, *kanawes* (cloth from Meshed), and cloths imported from England, mostly cheap cottons; camels, dates, etc.

The transit trade of Nushki is, however, very considerable. The Government returns of the trade that passed through Nushki during the year from April, 1900, to April, 1901, showed an aggregate of Rs.1,534,452, against Rs.1,235,411 for the preceding twelve months, while two years before (1898-1899) the returns barely amounted to Rs.728,082. Last year, 1901, the trade returns made a further jump upwards in the nine months from April to the end of December, 1901, the imports amounting to Rs.680,615, and the exports Rs.925,190, or an aggregate of Rs.1,605,805, which is very satisfactory indeed.

So much has been written of late about Nushki, especially in connection with the new railway, that I have very little to add. I most certainly think that, strategically and commercially, Nushki is bound to become a very important centre, and, as far as trade goes, eventually to supplant Quetta altogether, owing to its more convenient position. The projected railway from Quetta to Nushki will be a great boon to caravans, both from Afghanistan and Persia, because the severe cold of Quetta makes it very difficult for camels to proceed there in winter, and camel drivers have a great objection to taking their animals there.

For any one looking ahead at the future and not so much at the present, it seems, however, almost a pity that the newly sanctioned railway should not join Nushki with Shikarpur or Sibi instead of Quetta, which would have avoided a great and apparently almost useless detour. Nushki will be found to develop so fast and so greatly that, sooner or later, it will have to be connected in a more direct line with more important trading centres than Quetta. Quetta is not a trading centre of any importance, and is merely a military station leading nowhere into British territory in a direct line.

However, even the Quetta-Nushki railway is better than nothing, and will certainly have a beneficial effect upon the country it will pass through. From a military point of view the railway as far as Nushki only is practically useless. It is only a distance of some ninety odd miles, through good country with plenty of water and some grazing.

In England one reads in the papers and hears people talk of this railway as the Quetta-Sistan Railway, and people seem to be under the impression that Nushki is on the Persian border. It should be clearly understood that from Nushki to Sistan (Sher-i-Nasra) the distance, through practically desert country and scanty water, is over 500 miles. To my mind it is in the Robat-Nushki portion of

that distance, where travelling is difficult, and for troops almost impossible, that a railway is mostly needed. I have gone to much trouble, and risked boring the reader, to give all the differential altitudes upon the portion of the road between Robat and Nushki, and it will be seen that hardly anywhere does the track rise suddenly to more than 50 or 100 feet at most. The ground could easily be made solid enough to lay a line upon; tanks for the water supply might be established at various stations, and a railway could be built with no trouble and comparatively small expense.

Again, for the trade of Southern Persia, Robat would, I think, be a fairly good terminus on the Perso-Beluch frontier; but, in order to compete with Russia in Sistan and Khorassan, it would be a very good thing if the Government could enter into an arrangement with Afghanistan, so that if such a railway were built it should strike from Dalbandin across the desert up to the Southern bank of the Halmund, and have Sher-i-Nasrya in Sistan for its terminus. This would do away almost altogether—except in a small section—with the difficulty of the water, and would shorten the distance by at least one quarter.

The idea one often hears that it would be dangerous to construct such a railway, because it would be to open a passage for Russia into India, is too ridiculous to be argued about. It might be pointed out that the Russians on their side seem not to reciprocate the fear of our invading their country, for they are pushing their railways from the north as far as they can towards the Persian frontier, and it is stated that a concession has been obtained by them for a railway line to Meshed.

But, either *via* Robat or the Halmund, the principal point is that if we do not wish to lose Southern Persia we must push the railway with the utmost speed, at least as far as the frontier. Anything, in such a case, is better than nothing, and most undoubtedly a telegraph line should be established without delay—possibly as far as the Sher-i-Nasrya Consulate. Matters are much more urgent than we in England think, and if warning is not taken we shall only have ourselves to blame for the consequences.

From Nushki I went to a great extent along the line which is to be followed by the future railway. It seemed very sensibly traced, avoiding expensive difficulties, such as tunnels, as much as possible, but of course this railway has to go over a good portion of mountainous country and cannot be built on the cheap.



THE TRACK BETWEEN NUSHKI AND KISHINGI.

I left Nushki on the 31st, following a limpid stream of water, and we began a zig-zag ascent of the mountains before us to the east, leaving behind to the north-east in a valley a large camp of railway engineers and surveyors. After some two miles we reached a broad valley, and we continued to rise until we had reached the pass, 4,820 feet. On the other side we descended only 75 feet to a plain—a plateau, with hill ranges rising on it, and a barrier of higher mountains behind. The vegetation here was quite different from anything we had met in the desert, and *kotor* was plentiful—a plant, the Beluch say, eaten by no animal. Tamarisk seemed to flourish—it is a wonderful plant that flourishes almost everywhere.

The plain was subdivided into three. In the first portion, four miles wide, and one broad, the *monguli* shrub was abundant, and, like the *kotor*, was pronounced a useless plant, despised by all beasts. In the second plain we found more *kotor*, and in the last—very sandy—a lot of tamarisk. The ground was cut about by numerous dry water-channels, and after a very easy march of some eleven miles we came to the bungalow of Kishingi, having ascended from 3,745 feet at the Nushki Tashil to 4,720 feet at the Kishingi rest-house. We had seen a great many white pillar posts indicating the line of the future railroad.

We had now quite a different type of rest-houses—two-storied, and very nice too, the two rooms being comfortably enough furnished. A caravanserai was attached to the bungalow.

Still going east we crossed another narrow valley, through which the railway was traced, and after going over a pass 5,250 feet we were in a valley with a lot of *johr* growing upon it—a plant which the Beluch say is deadly to man and beast alike. On the top of the pass we saw a Mesjid, and several more were found on descending on the other side as well as a graveyard.

A curious white Mesjid was to be seen here shaped like an 8, and erected on the site where a Beluch had been killed. A conical mountain to the south, the Mudonek Ateng, was famous, my camel driver told me, because a Beluch fakir is said to have remained on the top of it for 25 days without food or water. A small stone shelter could be seen on the top of the mountain, which, they say, had been the fakir's abode during his long fast.

There is very little of special interest on this well-known part of the route near Quetta. We rose for several miles to a higher pass (5,700 feet), and were then on a higher flat plateau with a high range stretching half-way across it from south-south-east to north-north-west. One's attention was at once drawn to the north-east by two renowned peaks in British Beluchistan, the Chiltan, and further off the Takatu Mount. At their foot on the other side lay Quetta. In front of these we had the Hilti range stretching north-west to south-east, ending in Mount Barag on the north, and the two Askhan hills.

This part seemed more populated, and we left to the east the tribe of Gurghena, comprising four villages at intervals of about one mile from one another. The last was situated in the wide valley to

the west of the Hilti range. Other villages could be seen further in the valley extending towards the south, which were supplied with water by a river flowing along the valley. A few *ghedan*, or low grass huts, were scattered about the valley, and some black tents 5½ feet high, with one side raised like an awning by means of sticks. A pen for sheep was erected near them with tamarisk branches and sticks.

We were very thirsty and went to one of these tents. The woman who occupied it gave us some water, but, although in abject poverty, angrily refused to accept a silver coin in payment, saying that Beluch cannot be paid for hospitality. Water costs nothing. God gives water for all the people alike, and, if they were to accept payment, misfortune would fall upon them.

Further on we passed the village of Paden, with cultivation all round and plenty of water. The chief had quite an imposing residence, with a tower and castellated entrance gate, and the characteristic cylindrical mangers for horses in front of his dwelling. But although more elaborate, even this house—the largest I had seen—was absolutely devoid of windows, except for a loop-hole to the east of the tower, which I think was more for defensive purposes than for ventilation's sake.

The village of Kardegap was seen next, and we arrived at Morad Khan Kella (5,500 feet) twenty-four miles from our last camp.

CHAPTER XLI

Morad Khan Kella—The horrors of a camera—Seven high dunes—Three tracks—Where the railway will be laid—A fine old tamarisk turned into a Ziarat—Pagoda-like rest-houses—Science *versus* comfort—Kanak—Afghan women—The Kandahar road—How we butcher foreign names—Quetta and Chaman—The horse fair and Durbar at Sibi—Arrival in Calcutta—The first mishap—The death of faithful Lawah—The end.

THERE was a ruined fort at Morad Khan Kella, and half a mile off a Beluch village with two towers. Each house had a separating wall extending outwardly. The Beluch is wretched if he is not secluded. The first thing he ever wants to know is the exact extent of his property, then he is quite happy and can live at peace with his neighbours. As folks live more outside their houses than indoors, I suppose such a demarcation of property is necessary. Moreover, people and beasts live in friendly intercourse, and no doubt the beasts, which may be the cherished pets of one man, may be just the reverse to his neighbours. The houses were rectangular and plastered over with mud.

The people here were not quite so friendly as in other villages, and one began to feel the effects of nearing civilisation. Somebody, too, had been at this people with a camera before, for I hardly had time to take mine out of its case before the whole population, which had collected around, stampeded in all directions in the utmost confusion. Only a little child—whom the mother dropped in the hurry-scurry—was left behind, and he was a quaint little fellow clad in a long coloured gown and a picturesque red hood.

We left Morad Khan Kella (5,430 feet) again on February 2nd, along the vast plain which is to be crossed by the future railway from north to south (190°). On nearing the Killi range we came again to some high sand dunes rising in a gentle gradient to 250 feet, their lowest point being to the north, the highest to the south. The plain itself on which we were travelling (stretching from south-west to north-east) rose gradually to 5,650 feet on undulating ground with a number of sand hills, seven high long dunes, and some minor ones.

We then came to a flat plain slanting northwards and with high sand accumulations to the south near the hill range. A rivulet of salt water losing itself in the sand was found next, and then we had to cross a pass 6,020 feet. One obtained a beautiful view of the Mustang Mountains to the south-east with two plains, intersected by a high mountain range between us and them. There were three tracks from this pass. One south-east, called the Mustang track, the other (north-east) the Tiri Road, and one, on which we were travelling, north-north-east (50°) to Kanak. The very high Kuh-i-Marang peak could be seen in the distance to the south-east.

The railway will here follow the river which, coming from Mustang, flows south-west to Panchepoy. Then the line will proceed through the gorge in the mountains to the west. Some few miles from Kanak at the entrance of this gorge were curious cuts in the sand, evidently caused by water. Tamarisk was most luxuriant here.



TALERI (KANAK). The new type of Rest House between Nushki and Quetta.

A small graveyard and a semi-natural Ziarat, formed by a much contorted centenarian tamarisk tree of abnormal proportions, were also to be seen here. The branches had been twisted to form a low doorway leading to a huge grave in the centre of the enclosing oval formed by the old tree and some other smaller ones. Large round stones, as well as palm leaves, brooms, and various implements had been deposited on the grave; while suspended to the tree branches over the doorway hung brass camel-bells and tassels from camel collars.

During that day we had come across a great many Mesjids, either single or in sets of three, and several other Ziarats of no special importance. In the valley of Kanak there were a number of Beluch towns and villages, two at the foot of the Shalkot Mountain and one in each valley to the south of the track.

We made our last halt at the pagoda-like Bungalow of Kanak, a comfortable large, black wood verandah with a tiny dwelling in the centre, whitewashed walls, and a corrugated iron roof. The man who built it was apparently more of a mechanical engineer than an architect, and every detail is carried out on some highly scientific principle which impressed one much after the less elaborate but very practical abodes we had inhabited further east.

Here there was a gate suspended on long iron rods besides the usual hinges, each screw had a bolt at the end, and on proceeding inside, the ceiling was supported on very neat but most insecure-looking wooden bars no thicker than three inches. A most ingenious theory of angles kept up the heavy roof — why it did, Heaven only knows! In contrast to the other bungalows, where we had no glass at all, here we had glass everywhere. One's bedroom door was two-thirds made of the most transparent panes of glass that could be got, and so were the two doors of the bath-room—one leading directly on to the outside verandah. The boards of the floor had shrunk, and between the interstices one got a bird's-eye view of what went on in the underlying room.

A great deal of space and expense has been devoted to outer show and scientific detail, whereas the rooms were small, and unfortunate was the man who tried to occupy the upper room when a fire had been lighted in the chimney of the room below. The bungalow was, however, comfortably furnished, and from its spacious verandah afforded a most magnificent view all round.

The high Chiltan Mountains above Shalkot were on one side, and various picturesque hill ranges stretched across the large plane dotted with a Beluch village here and there.

In front of the entrance gate at the bungalow a nice pool of water reflected in its more or less limpid waters the images of over-leaning leafless trees.



THE HORSE FAIR AT SIBI, BELUCHISTAN.

Whatever remarks one may make about the construction of the bungalow it must be confessed that it photographed well. (See illustration facing page [438](#)).

The altitude of Kanak was 5,730 feet.

We made an early start on this our last march, steering between the handsome Takatu Mountain and the Chiltan, between which Quetta lies. We met a number of Afghan women in long, loose black gowns from neck to foot, and silver ornaments round the neck and arms. They had austere but handsome features with expressive eyes.

About six miles from Quetta we struck the wide Kandahar Road at the foot of the Takatu Mountain. From this point we got the first glimpse of Shalkot or Quetta. "Quetta" is the English corruption, abbreviation, or adaptation, if you please, of the word "Shalkot!" One almost wished one could have trembled when one stopped for a moment to read the first notice in English on approaching the town, warning new-comers of the dreadful things that would happen to any one entering the town carrying a camera or found sketching or taking notes!

It came on to snow as we approached the place, and shortly after sunset my caravan entered the neat, beautifully-kept roads of Quetta, and behold, joy!—I heard for the first time since August last the whistle of a railway engine. This was on February 3rd, 1902.

I met with unbounded civility and hospitality from everybody in Quetta as well as at Chaman, our most north-westerly point on the Afghan boundary. For those who believe in the unpreparedness of England, it may be stated that, from this point, we could with ease lay a railroad to Kandahar in less than three weeks.

A most charming invitation from the Honourable the Agent to the Governor-General and Chief Commissioner in Beluchistan, Col. C. E. Yate, C.S.I., C.M.G., etc., took me almost directly to Sibi, where the annual horse show and Beluch Durbar were to take place. A great many locally-bred animals were exhibited, some very good indeed. Camel, horse, and cow races enlivened the show, and a very weird representation of a Beluch raid was performed with much *entrain*. At the Durbar, the leading Chiefs were presented by Col. Yate with handsome gold and silver embroidered coats, waistcoats, scarves and turbans, and the scene was very impressive.

One could not help again being struck by the dignified, manly behaviour of the Beluch on one side, and their frank respect for the British officers,—a respect indeed well-deserved, for a finer set of men in every way than our Political Service Officers can be found nowhere. It is a pity we have not similar men *all* over India.

From Sibi I travelled by rail across country to Calcutta, where I arrived at the beginning of March, having completed my journey overland—if the short crossing from Baku to Enzeli be excepted—from Flushing (Holland).



BELUCH BOYS OFF TO THE RACES—HORSE FAIR AT SIBI.

It never does to boast. I was feeling somewhat proud to have travelled such a long distance with no serious mishaps or accidents, when, much to my sorrow, Sadek, my Persian servant, returned one evening to the hotel dreadfully smashed up. He had been attacked in the bazaar by three Englishmen of Calcutta, two of whom had held him down on the ground while the third kicked him badly in the head, body and legs. It appears that these three ruffians had a grievance against Persians in general, hence their heroic deed against a man who had done them no harm.

It was indeed too bad to have to register that, in a journey of over 10,000 miles, the only people who had shown any barbarity were—in a sort of way—my own countrymen!

Much as I love Beluchistan, I like India less and less each time I go there. Maybe it is because I always have misfortunes while in the country. Indeed, I received a last and severe blow while proceeding by train from Calcutta to Bombay to catch a homeward steamer. My faithful cat Lawah died, suffocated by the intense moist heat in the carriage. The other two cats I just managed to keep alive by constant rubbing with ice.

From Bombay I despatched Sadek back to Teheran *via* the Gulf and Bushire, and the two surviving cats and I sailed by P. & O. for England, where we all three arrived happy, safe, and sound.

APPENDIX

TABLES SHOWING THE DISTANCE FROM QUETTA TO MESHERED VIA ROBAT, SHER-I-NASRYA (SISTAN), BIRJAND.

Distances from Quetta to Persian frontier.

<i>Name of Stage.</i>	<i>Distance.</i>
	<i>Miles. Yards.</i>
Quetta to Girdi Talab	16 —
Girdi to Kanak (Taleri)	16 —
Kanak to Morad Khan Kella	24 —
Morad Khan Kella to Kishangi	24 —
Kishangi to Nushki	12 —
Nushki to Mall	31 1,320
Mall to Kuchaki Chah	15 1,154
Kuchaki Chah to Padag	13 756
Padag to Yadgar	22 1,390
Yadgar to Karodak	15 970
Karodak to Dalbandin	16 380
Dalbandin to Chakal	18 190
Chakal to Sotag	14 220
Sotag to Mirui	12 1,320
Mirui to Chah Sandan	20 220
Chah Sandan to Tretoh	23 760
Tretoh to Noh Kundi	21 1,660
Noh Kundi to Mashki Chah	21 1,100
Mashki Chah to Sahib Chah	28 660
Sahib Chah to Mukak	23 660
Mukak to Saindak	13 880
Saindak to Kirtaka	18 750
Kirtaka to Chah Mahomed	16 1,107
Chah Mahomed Raza to Raza Kuh-i-Malek-Siah	24 368

DISTANCES FROM ROBAT (BELUCHISTAN) TO SHER-I-NASRYA (SISTAN).

Robat to Hormak	18 miles.
Hormak to Girdi-Chah	32 "
Girdi-Chah to Mahomed Raza Chah	28 "
Mahomed Raza Chah to Lutak	12 "
Lutak to Baghak	16 "
Baghak to Sher-i-Nasrya (Sistan)	8 "

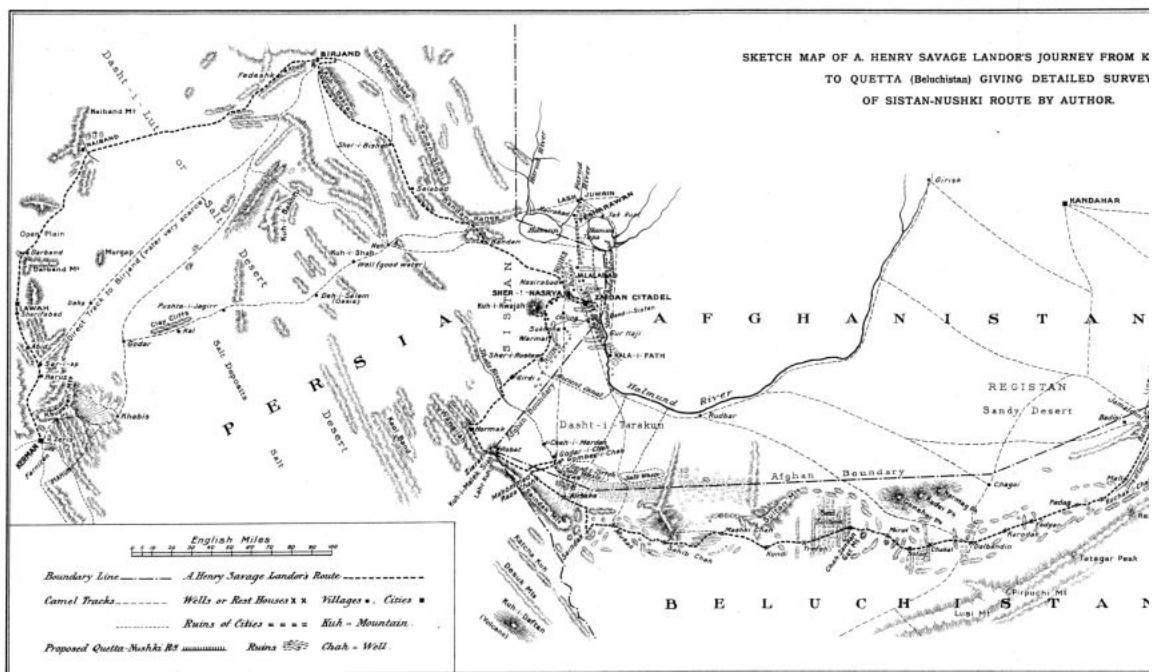
Sher-i-Nasrya to Birjand, about 12 stages 210 miles.
Birjand to Meshed, *via* Turbat-i-Haidari 277 "

BOTANICAL SPECIMENS COLLECTED BY AUTHOR IN NORTH BELUCHISTAN. (PRESENTED TO THE BRITISH MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY.)

Native Name.

Agat	Lornia spinosa. Sch. Bip.
Buju	Stipa (grass).
Eshwerk	Rhazya stricta Dec.

<i>Jirri</i> × <i>Jerr</i>	Artemisia Herba-Alva Asso.
<i>Karkar</i>	Fagonia Aucheri Boiss.
<i>Kesankur</i>	Peganum Harmala L.
<i>Kanderi</i>	(?) Salsola.
<i>Kirri</i>	Tamarix articulata vahl.
<i>Kul</i> }	Phragmites communis Trin. (A reed.)
<i>Drug</i> }	
<i>Kulich' nell</i>	Cressa cretica L.
<i>Lara</i>	{ Anabasis sp.
	{ Tamarix sp.
<i>Pish</i>	Nannorrhops Ritchieana Wendl. (Palm.)
<i>Sachdonne</i>	Astragalus sp.
— —	Moricandia sp.
— —	Alyssum.
— —	Cichorium (?).
— —	Nerium Oleander L.
— —	Convolvulus sp.
— —	Salicornia fruticosa L.
— —	Suaeda monoica Forsk.



SKETCH MAP OF A. HENRY SAVAGE LANDOR'S JOURNEY FROM KERMAN (Persia) TO QUETTA (Beluchistan) GIVING DETAILED SURVEY OF SISTAN-NUSHKI ROUTE BY AUTHOR.

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